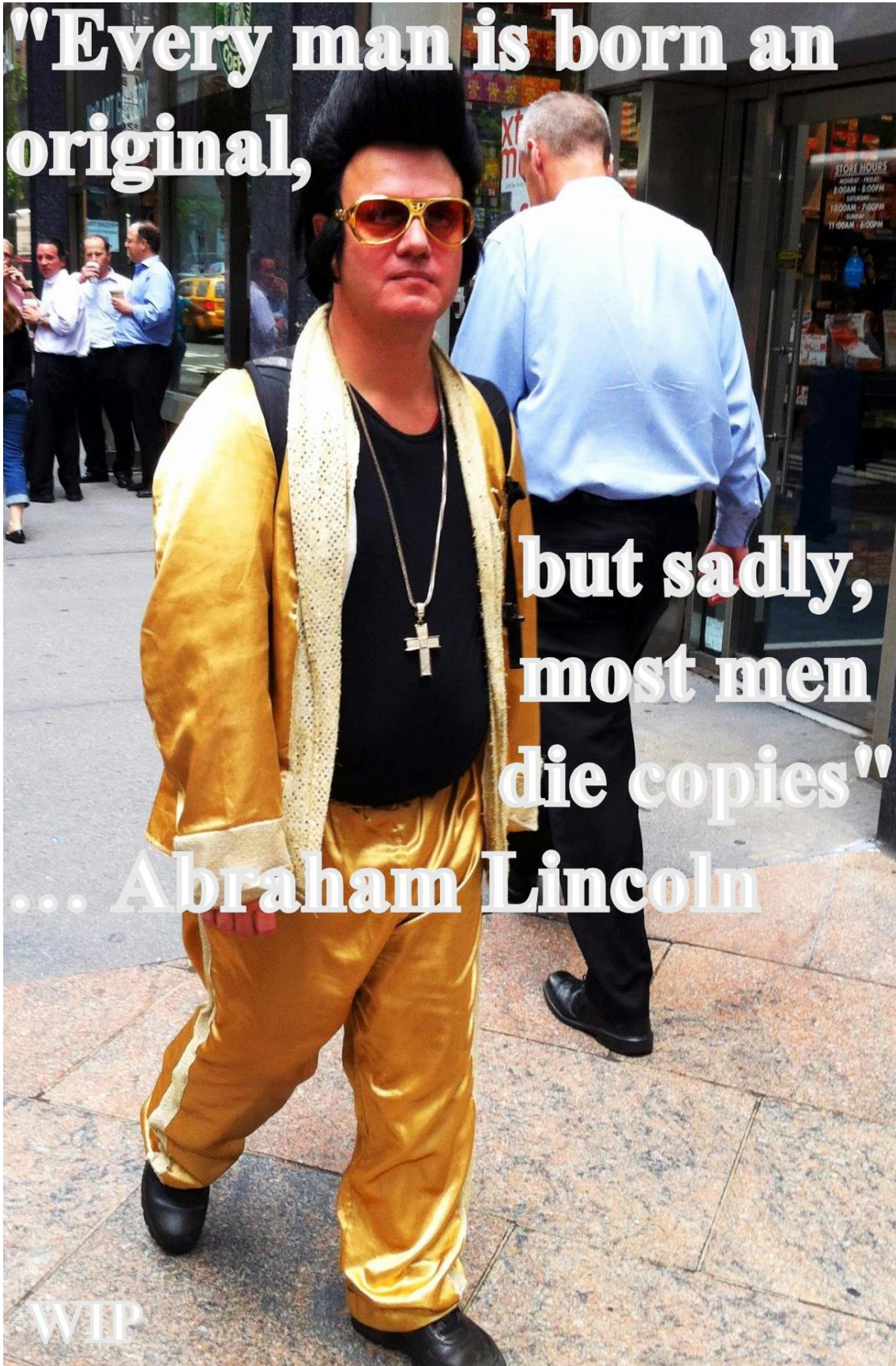


"Every man is born an original,

**but sadly,
most men
die copies"**

... Abraham Lincoln

WIP



Not The Man...(I Never Was)

By Ken G. Wolf aka by Ken O. Eldib

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Go to "6" to get to body of book that has not been inserted into outline yet

(The story of a man who is unknowingly from the future and the past. In the past, he was a slave girl in the harem of the King of a neighboring kingdom and in the future he was a ??? In each case, he half the brain of the slave girl and the other half (hemisphere) is that of Phil... the implication is that the first time he's "born" it's after an alien abduction in the 1950's and the second time it's a cryogenic resurrection)

THE LATE GREAT PLANET...BURP!

DIARY OF A MAD SMUGGLER

(An American Tragedy)

MAKE A PLOT OUTLINE AND THEN INSERT SECTIONS INTO APPROPRIATE PART
offer to U.S. and Japan pubs

"1". intro Phil sits in hot tub and ends it all, (but Sharon hears the gun shot and fishes him out in time for him to be cryogenically preserved as was his wish.. (paid for by his insurance policy_.

ordinary guy, family and job

Tries "legitimate" business (consulting) and finds out about the seamy side of it

"2". body (problem) needs money

Gets into trouble financially and tries smoke as a temporary means of relieving stress. (this after a 7 year layoff from the stuff).

First meets Jack who becomes friend and connection

Finances improve again.

Meets Vaughn the pastor that came to Jack's house to conduct Bible study,

Realizes he's got the capital to make a big buy and therefore to make it big and then settle down on the coast and fish for lobsters for the rest of his life

"3". action goes to Mexico or someplace for drugs

Gets in touch with the big boys, who invite him to get in on the action.

Starts affair with Jill (his friend Jack's wife)

Gets found out by his friend Vaughn (the pastor) who says he's going to turn Phil in.

Phil kills Vaughn to silence him.

Phil gets religion and a demon is exorcised at the revival

Goes back to work and church, reaffirms his republican party affiliation, quits smoking and goes straight.

Caught by police after Sharon turns him in, (because she's found out about his affair. She survives his attempt at hiring some guys to hit her before she can testify in court., (she miraculously survives the attempt and never finds out that he was trying to "hit" her, but turns him on other grounds/infidelity).

Freed on bond and goes through another metamorphosis where he rebels against the system again. (?).

Goes on trial

"4". climax (solution to his problem or everything blows up in his face

Led away to jail for *good*.

Sharon loses the house and then the kids are taken away from her, since she has lost her job etc.

gets out of jail on a technicality

buys insurance policy to be cryonically frozen

hides the gold, thinking that when he's thawed he'll remember where it is

investments in real estate are bankrupted by rising oceans, Florida coast is inundated by sea.

Finally remembers that there's gold in them thar hills, but can't remember where he puts it so he goes to a 23rd century Radio Shack and buys a metal detector. Tracks down what's left of his old house and surreptitiously searches the back yard, all he finds is a three hundred year old pair of horseshoes that he had lost in 1992.

When he's thawed he doesn't initially remember where it is and being a pauper is put to work in a world where people like him are like indentured servants

"5". conclusion

outcome

The sun rose as usual, as it had for a billion years, in the east and in this case over the roof of a house that was once new, but was now old. A man's eyes slowly opened to a scene that should have been vaguely familiar, but the neurons in this man's brain were still a bit scrambled, despite the latest nano-technology. Phil was back home and looking up at a tree that he'd seen thousands of times, but which he

hadn't seen in a hundred years. The last time he had seen it, he had been sitting in a hot tub on this same deck, a deck that by now, despite excellent care, was on it's last legs.

The last time he looked up at the tree and the sunrise, he has on his last legs, but now he had been given a new lease on life and the tree was the one nearing its demise. The question now, was how much would he remember, would the neurons ever find their way home to the paths they had been on so long ago. The house had been maintained, rented out by his estate and now back in his hands, but could he ever make sense of things, could he reclaim his mind?

"Look!" his nurse prodded him, "Think...does anything here look familiar to you?"

If he had to write one more "regret to advise" letter or email at work, he was definitely going to explode. His life was not just meaningless, it had become incomprehensible. To say there was very little of meaning to live for did not scratch the surface of his moribund existence. Heck, he didn't even care much about food or sex anymore. There's only so many times you can eat sushi before you get tired of it or any other trendy delicacy and their accompanying gastric-intestinal distress.

Phil didn't read or converse much anymore, he mostly just stared at images and numbers on the TV or computer trying to "discover" what life was all about or how to make more money. Each day finally ended with him crawling into bed, being careful not to bump into Sharon. After all she needed her sleep and the last thing she wanted was to be touched by him, except maybe once or twice a month. Oh well, life sucked, but at least he could look around and see millions of other folks who seemed to have it even worse, at least he had a pot to pee in and a window to throw it out.

The jocularity of his youth had more than recently folded into the charade called middle age, where fun was swapped for a career and bodily pain was a constant reminder of his misspent youth. The kids were spoiled, the grandparents neglected and his parents and siblings rarely seen, what with globalization. He had to keep up with the Jones, away from the girls and apart from his wife. Like so many of his friends, he had given up dope and taken up a private life of dark thoughts, fears and misgivings. He mindlessly drove through life on auto pilot just like mowing a lawn that hadn't grown much and you couldn't tell what you'd mowed, but you kept on going anyway. On the other hand, he knew he was ready for one last try at making a bundle, and he had two things going for him, a good moral upbringing and a complete lack of scruples.

..."Would you like a piece of cake Mr. Glencoe, wake up Mr. Glencoe", the nurse stared into the man's blank glassy eyes. "Dr., we're still having trouble reviving this one, what should I do?" Before the doctor could answer Phil blinked.

Several days later he was at the space station shopping mall, they had taken him there to acclimate. A plump woman with tall dark hair was playing a grand piano, the songs were unfamiliar but nice, shoppers walked to and fro, their colorful shopping bags had a name unfamiliar to him.

Phil was still in a daze, almost like he had been under general anesthesia for a long time, they had told him his memory would start coming back, but so far there was nothing, just a huge empty feeling. A feeling of never having been loved, a feeling of loneliness that surpassed anything imaginable. He knew he had been in a dream for a long time and had woken up in this strange place, but little else made sense. His memory was gone, he was conscious, but he was a man with no past he couldn't remember a thing.

In a cage behind the overstuffed chair he was in he noticed a pretty little bird in a wicker cage. “What kind of bird is it”, he asked himself. He couldn’t remember although he had a distant memory of seeing birds like that before, maybe even of having one just like it. “What kind of bird is that?”, he asked his nurse.

“It’s a Canary”, she replied, “listen Phil, I’ve got to return some things, will you be okay here for a few minutes?” Phil didn’t answer, but was obvious to her that this lump was going nowhere. She left him to listen and look and maybe get his bearings in this new world so that he could start working.

The pianist played another song and this one sounded strangely familiar, he had heard it before, but he could not make any more of a connection than that. He was enjoying the music, but the bird was even more exciting to him. There it was in it’s elegant wicker cage, jumping around from perch to swing, picking up a piece of twig and then dropping it, like Phil an alien in this place. Then the music stopped, the lady stood up and started collecting her music, Phil was disappointed, “darn, I wish she’d keep playing” he thought. He hoped someone else would sit down and continue the music, he saw a man walk by and wondered if he know how to play, certainly someone in the store had taken lessons once.

Looking back at the bird, now that the music had stopped he could tell that it wasn’t singing. It was continuing it’s same behavior hopping, fluttering and looking at the bigger world outside it’s sad little home. He stared at it sadly, but also lovingly, as it was a beautiful creature and it’s expression gave no indication of how it was feeling, only it’s slightly neurotic behavior betrayed it’s plight. A middle aged smiled at the bird and made a remark to her husband as she passed by, another woman stopped at the cage and smiled widely, obviously enchanted, “you’re a good little bird, a good little bird”, she told it as she stared. The little canary jumped to it’s swing and turned away from her, perhaps frightened or shy. As soon as the lady left, the bird hopped down to the floor of the cage and seemed to watch her walk away., it made a few chirps.

“Why won’t the Canary sing”, Phil wondered. It looked happy enough, perky and pretty in the wicker cage. the grand piano was still, why wouldn’t it fill the void? Maybe it had forgotten how to, maybe it had never learned, maybe it had been alone for too long. Phil wondered about these things as he watched the people pass by, he was looking for pretty girls of course and very occasionally one to two would walk by. He had thoughts coming to mind, that he understood, but that he couldn’t put into words anymore. They were of course sexual in nature, after all sex was number two on his list of favorite things, after cake. He watched them and knew what he wanted to do, but couldn’t think of the words for it, “what do you call that thing?”, he asked himself. What was the word he was looking for, twat? patutti?, something like that. He couldn’t even remember the old dirty words that used to flow so effortlessly through his jagged brain. Why couldn’t the canary sing? Had it forgotten or never learned?

He laid down his king, it was a symbolic gesture to acknowledge defeat, the chess game was over.

“I wish I could write the kind of lines you can say”, he told her, “maybe then I could be a writer.”

Sharon had a knack for saying the profound without seeming to try. She was a raving beauty of sorts, not tall enough to model anything but khakis or the like, but she had the package, all the angels, all the curves. Just then Dr. Peterson walked by, “I’m going to my room” he said, “please don’t be long.”

Peterson was a piece of work, a brilliant man who spent his days with his finger up men’s rectums checking to see if their prostates were enlarged enough to warrant a PSA test. Like everyone else at the party, his life was a study in disillusionment, he never could have imagined how things had turned out

and it made him sick whenever he thought about it. He retired to his bedroom to read Dotcheveski, but really he was just waiting to make love to his queen.

Next door the rock and roll boys were cleaning their pool, getting ready for a real party, not the kind of staid affair Peterson was having.

“Why don’t you run away with me?”, Phil asked Sharon in a weak attempt to woo her away from the doctor.

She laughed, “run away with you? Where to, your little piece of paradise over the garage?”

Knowing that Peterson was gone, Phil kissed her hand and considered for a moment what his next move would be, “have some more Champaign my dear...”

They tumbled through the door of his apartment, laughing and holding onto each other. They would have heard the toilet running if they weren’t so drunk, but in their condition it was immaterial.

“I’m surprised you don’t lighten your hair”, Phil remarked the next morning, “I though all women lightened their hair?”

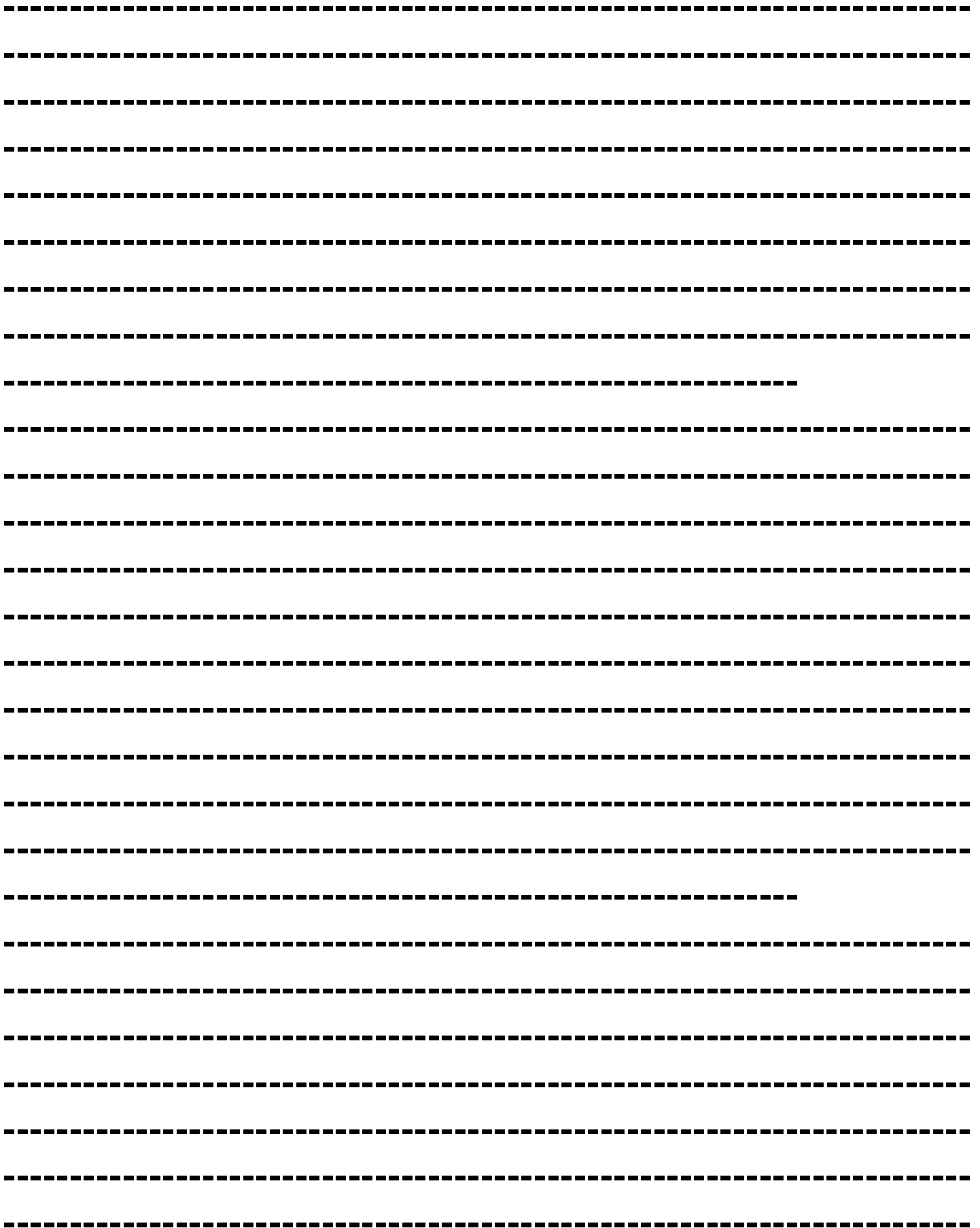
Sharon grabbed the sheet and rolled out of bed, disgusted with herself, there was no reason in her mind to answer him, his question was a mute point, just like their night together had been.

**** River into space, from the ice caps and snowy mountains of the world. Ice is melted and a torrential river rises into space, it branches off into many tributaries and is deposited on Jupiter, Mars, Europa or wherever it is needed, so the terraformers can use it to supply the dry planets that are being transformed into habitable planets. At the same time this creates on earth more habitable land, since man has conquered weather to a great extent.**

Who currently feels that the white race is threatened and supports it's immediate preservation? Only a small percentage of white males and an even smaller percentage of white females fall into this catagory. Aligned against this very small block are; black men and women, many white men and most white women. What does this mean for the future? Possibly it means continued increases in large black familes supported by the government through various government programs. This will result in an ever increasing number of black males marrying or just impregnating white women and a vicious cycle of ever increasing race mixing, eventually reducing the white race to a minority in the U.S. and eventually worldwide, as the black race continues it's high birthrate and the white race it's low birth rate.

The rebellion will take place in the future, when the army eventually consists primarily of black men. One day in a coordinated strike, they will lock up the white soldiers and thus controll the weapons. The white fliers will be also locked up so the only fliers will be blacks, who by this time make up a good percentage of the air force. The outcome is preditable.

The solution is economic disincentives for out of wedlock children now, or horrendous bloodshed for our great, great grandchildren.



"1". intro ordinary guy, family and job

**Tries "legitimate" business (consulting) and finds out
about the seamy side of it**

As hard as a woodpeckers lips

Phil floated on his back in the hot tub and looked up at the Turkey Buzzard circling above his suburban yard. He was starting to loose consciousness now but still had his senses largely intact. Phil had seen buzzards circle before a number of times while in the hot tub, to the buzzards he must have looked like something to eat. The big bird was about three hundred feet in the air and Phil could see it clearly, so the bird with it's binocular vision, could certainly see him much better. It determined that the man in the water was alive and let the thermals carry it silently away as usual, but this time if it hung around it could have tasted flesh.

Phil had decided that this was how it would end, he was broke and he was sure his check to the undertaker would bounce as well, but heck it was not a bad way to go. His vision was narrowing now and his consciousness ebbing. He could see the tunnel of light and as his head sank beneath the warm water of the tub, he began to leave this world and started his journey to that other place. He now no longer conscious but he was not yet dead, he blacked for some moments and then felt like he was awake again but not longer in his body. He was walking now towards the light and he heard a familiar voice, it was the old mans voice the old man that he had known years before, but now he knew who it was. It was his father's father, a man Phil had never met, but whom he had known somehow anyway.

Then he heard another voice which he did not recognize, but as he approached the light he saw the spirit from which it came and recognized his mother's father. "You stupid, stupid man", Grandpa Bill said, "why the hell did you do this?"

Phil could't find any voice to answer, but Grandpa Bill continued, "things were not that bad, you could have just declared bankruptcy you didn't have to end it all, why your head is as hard as lips on a woodpecker!"

"It's true son", said his other grandfather's voice, " you needn't have hurt your family so much, I wish we could tell you to go back, but you've really done it this time."

Phil knew the grandpas were right, without immediate and drastic medical intervention, he would be gone for sure. His lungs were filling with water even now and his blood was full of the sleeping pills poison.

Walking down the long term airport parking lot row, it was nice to see the familiar dent on the rear fender of the family station wagon. It meant that after his tiring trip to Detroit, he was almost home. Phil got into the car and started it up, the radio came on automatically and began blaring some classical music. Obviously it had been tuned to NPR and now at this late hour, the talking was over and it was music only. Phil pressed the seek button and finally came across something "good", it was Simple Kind of Man by Lenard Skynard, decent listening for the ride home.

Phil lay there in bed, listening for Sharon's breathing, was she asleep yet? He hoped so, because he was ready to do the "dirty" deed. His hands slipped silently down along his body and he slipped his briefs down his thighs. He rubbed against the sheets slowly, as quietly as he possibly could, all the while listening for her respiration, ready to stop if need be. He felt guilty, he didn't think he was doing anything wrong, after all she was only horny once or twice a month. He figured it was better than going to a hooker or having an affair. He figured that in a way masturbation was saving his marriage, but it was just another catch 22 in this crazy life of his. If Sharon woke up she would be angry, she would feel spurned, as she had put it once before, he made her feel like "what was she there for anyway?"

His mind raced through the latest fantasy, it was a good one, it had to be otherwise there would be no way to get the job done with so little movement and practically no rocking of the bed. By some standards, they were getting kinkier all the time. He wished that he did not have to do it this way and Sharon would surely lambast him about not even trying to arouse her, "you don't get any if you don't even try", was one of her lines. She didn't get it, just as she accused him of not getting it, she didn't get it either. She was as clueless or inconsiderate of his needs as he was of hers. He thought it pretty funny that she considered her sexual favors to be such a valuable commodity, her attitude was that it was a priceless commodity. For his part Phil would as soon do it with her or without her, it was perhaps another "stupid" guy thing. He didn't so much care how he got his rocks off, he just needed to get them off and now ahhhhh, he was doing it. He sighed a big sigh of relief and felt immensely better as the juices ran down his leg, he pulled his underwear back up, still being careful to be very quiet. The deed was done and Phil felt the angst and bitterness that he had felt for the last day or two melt away along with his melting member.

He was a man who needed to be touched and hugged and to do the same to a woman. He was also a man who could not stand the constant rejection and had come up with this strategy to keep his sanity. She was tired all the time, she worked too hard, because she didn't want to be dependent on a man to support her. As far as Phil was concerned, it was quite possible that she was working on a self-fulfilling prophecy. She was doing it for them would be her argument, but in the meantime, she had very little love left to give him and he was not an expert at extracting it from her. Should he become an expert or should he do it on his own? His emptiness had made him take the latter course, although he made the occasional clumsy attempt to be romantic.

It was not an ideal situation, but he argued to himself that this was his fate, at least for the present. Just another dimension of the battle of the sexes between him and his mate. They were both trapped by circumstances, happy at times, united at times, but also very different and at times very unhappy in their state of holy matrimony.

What a life, the highlights of his week were the day that he went to the sushi bar for "nigiri big" and a seaweed salad and Wednesdays and Sunday mornings when he treated himself to a large poppyseed crusty roll from the supermarket. Of course he enjoyed his hot tub and his dogs, but his role as a father and husband were at best marginally fulfilled. He felt like an uneasy guest in his own house and had caught himself almost calling his wife mame. He was a naturally very happy man who lived a dull life, his children the real treasure in his life, but he felt he was not fulfilling his destiny to provide them the example and quality of life that he dreamed of. He wanted to read more good books instead of watching TV for hours on end, but it seemed his time would never come.

"Yeah, I'll just milk em for everything I can get and then move on to the next company", Phil gloated

"Dear God", Phil prayed. "Let me just live long enough to help raise my kids, then do whatever you want to. " Phil thought that would be the best thing, he would also get to enjoy the experience of raising the kids. His real motive though was to be there for them in whatever way he could."

Then the answer came back to him, maybe they'd be better off without him. That's what he thought sometimes and that's what others would think all the time.

He stood there at the sink and thought about his next deception against Sharon, she had taken the film he had bought and put it in her camera. He hadn't had a chance to take the plastic canister, now he'd have to buy another roll and throw the film out so he could inconspicuously gain a new canister without talking to her about it, although she'd probably not care.

"It's probably a good thing

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Or my dog ate my family

The first commercial was from AT&T and it touted it's new system to let us pay our tolls on the highway by flashing our card at the booth as we speed past. "First of all this will probably cause wrecks, when the system misfunctions, second now they've speed up the rat race a little more, you can't even catch your breath in a toll booth line", thought Phil. "Geez, it won't be long till they implant those chips in people's hands or foreheads and just scan us."

The next commercial was for a major credit card, it touted the virtues of using credit cards. Another clue that the new world order and all it's propaganda was bullshit and it was all about enslavement, not freedom.

"I won't forget you and you won't forget about me", Phil's `four and three-quarters' year old daughter Sally sang to Phil as she entered his tiny basement home office. Her words were sweetness to his ears, especially since he spent a lot of time worrying about what life would be like without her, due to divorce or death.

"2". body (problem) needs money

Get's into trouble financially and tries smoke as a temporary means of relieving stress. (this after a 7 year layoff from the stuff).

Phil would like to drive teachers ed, I mean teach drivers ed to dopers I mean young drivers, I mean dopers. He could teach them to be more alert and to keep their eyes on the road in front of them and to use their blinkers and to look in their blind spots and to keep their eyes on the road in front of them and to drive defensively and to drive slower and to keep their eyes open for brake lights in the road in front of them...and to remember that sometimes those people in front don't have working brake lights.

A CALLOUS BECOMES A FINGERNAIL

A blister becomes a calous becomes a fingernail becomes a horn. From injury to protection to defense to attack. So are the days of our lives, so is the evolution of a species. From a humble and maligned apelike "looser", reviled by the powerful cave bears and sabertooths and mamoths that are now extinct, our species has stumbled across history, culminating in this temporarily decisive moment in time.

Phil walked tthrough the supermarket, moving from the bakery where he got his morning croissant or poppy seed hard roll. From there he moved to the packaged bread section, here there were about fifty different types of bread for sale. Most of them were for niches of the bread market and occupied very little shelfspace. The ones that first caught Phil's eye were Hillbilly bread and Big Texas toast, but there were many others, mostly whole wheat or low calorie. Phil moved closer and read the label on the package, whole wheat, low calorie, high fiber it said.

"Huh!", thought Phil, "How can Hillbilly bread have such healthy wheat?" His stereotype of hillbillys made him think of them as eaiting plain old fashioned white bread. It was logical though that this new fangled bread that labeled itself "hillbilly", must be targeted at the segment of the yuppies that like to call themselves hillbilly's cause they identify with it's rowdy image if not their true roots perhaps.

They would call themselves middle class though, just as many of the 1990's real hillbillys would. The 1990's real hillbillys and there were a lot of them ate the bread from the biggest row of bread of all. It was the store's brand of plain old fashioned enriched white bread. This was the real bread of the hillbilly's. Todays real hillbillys lived in the cities and suburbs and the country, they are the undereducated, underemployed barely getting by lower working class of the 90's. Not living too bad compared to worldwide standards, very few were starving practically everyone had a TV, most people have color. If that was the mark of success as it appeared to be in the 1950's, then we'd all arrived. But if the mark of a society's success was stability and security, it had failed.

Phil was reminded that you have to fight for your freedom, or some one will take it. Either quickly and brutally or slowly and un-noticeably, but sooner or later if your not vigilant and prepared some one who thinks he knows what's best will rock your socks off.

“I’m going to fight for my freedom instead of going out without a fight”, thought Phil.

“...but how can you fight the whole world?,”

“I guess I’ll just try for peace with honor... good luck old boy”.

First meets Jack who becomes friend and connection

Finances improve again.

Meets Vaughn the pastor that came to Jack's house to conduct Bible study,

Realizes he's got the capital to make a big buy and therefore to make it big and then settle down on the coast and fish for lobsters for the rest of his life

"3". action goes to mexico or someplace for drugs

**Get's in touch with the big boys, who invite him
to get in on the action.**

Starts affair with Jill (his freind Jack's wife)

**Get's found out by his friend Vaughn (the
pastor) who says he's going to turn Phil in.**

**Phil kills Vaughn to silence him (try to devise the
perfect crime)**

**Phil get's religion and a demon is excercised at
the revival**

**Goes back to work and churck, reaffirms his
republican party affiliation, quits smoking and
goes straight.**

Welcome to earth third rock from the son was the name of the country hit.

**Phil had quit smoking so his days of thanking God that he had found a lighter or that there was a little
bit left in his stash were over. Now he found himself saying thank God for equally inane things, like**

thank God there was some cocktail sauce in the fridge after he had thawed out the frozen shrimp and other crazy things that he felt foolish about after opening his mouth. He knew he should be giving thanks for the really important things, not the trivial all the time.

**Caught by police after Sharon turns him in,
(because she's found out about his affair. She
survives his attempt at hiring some guys to hit
her before she can testify in court., (she
miraculously survives the attempt and never
finds out that he was trying to "hit" her, but turns
him on other grounds/infidelity).**

**Freed on bond and goes through another
metamorphosis where he
rebels against the system again. (?).**

Goes on trial

“I’m sorry Mr. Glencoe, regretfully we can not provide you with a new pair of lungs”, the doctor said the doctor.

Phil didn’t believe him, he believed this was a ploy for the Chinese government to get more money from him.

“Please doctor Lee, tell me how much it will cost, I’ve brought gold to pay for it and my friend Harry told me that I could get one from one of those condemned prisoner for \$ 20,000 in gold.”

Phil opened his sack and poured out the 50 pieces of gold onto the table.

The doctor looked at it and smiled, but he was not yet ready to deal. “Mr. Glencoe, again I must tell you, we can not give you new lungs, these stories about us taking organs from inmates are not true, I assure you of that.”

“Damn, it! I need a new lung or I’m going to die very soon! Cut the bullcrap and tell me the bottom line”, Phil was panicking.

“Mr. Glenco! Calm down, w want to help you, but you are too big for a Chinese lung anyway”, the doctor still was dodging the question.

“Please, please...”, Phil spoke more calmly now, “can’t you help me now, don’t let me die, I have a wife and children, they need me.”

There was a pause and then the doctor smiled as he looked at the Krugerands, maple leafs and double eagle gold coins, “I tell you what Mr. Glencoe, we can give you one lung for your gold, take it or leave it.”

The doctor was not so greedy, he was just like any other businessman, trying to get a good deal.

"4". climax (solution to his problem or everything blows up in his face

Led away to jail for good.

Indirect prison rape scene, the blacks for revenge against the man (wolves turning out the chickens)

after the attack, knowing he's bound to have AIDS he decides to write

Just about everything has a beginning and an end, be it a persons life or story in a book. The only thing that I know of that seems to have no beginning and no end is the universe and damn it, I don’t know much about that. All I know is that a lot of other people claim to know all about that stuff and it seems they’ve been trying to ram what they think they know about the universe down my throat all my life.

I’m a simple guy, always have been, I’m kind of like a big old dog, I was always pretty content to sit in my recliner and watch the world go by on the TV and enjoy the simple pleasures of life, like a cold beer, glass of wine or a nice little joint now and then. I also liked looking out the big sliding glass door at my backyard at my back yard and thinking about what needed to be done out there, like spraying the weeds, or watering the garden. There are a few other things I liked to contemplate doing, but being a married man, I had to put them on the back burner, until some distant point in time, like the afterlife if there is one. Of course with my luck there either won’t be one, or I’ll be down there instead of up there, and even if I was up there, they probably wouldn’t allow the kind of stuff I’d like to do, or at least the women wouldn’t want to, they probably won’t want to let my kind in. I guess I can just look back on the way it

was when I was in my twenties and had the freedom to carouse like an alley cat and be satisfied with those memories.

Not that I have that many of them, actually I didn't really get the carousing bit down until about two years before I got married, so I didn't do that much of it, the number of partners I had was between sixteen and twenty. It's hard to remember, but every once in a while I try, and it also depends on if your talking intercourse only or intercourse and oral sex, in any case I was able to remember sixteen women that I had intercourse with going back to my first experience and culminating with my wife. It was fun though and even though I caught an STD from it which I still have, I think I'd do it again if I had everything to do over again. Hopefully I'd be more careful though and take better precautions, but I don't know, I was pretty drunk most of the time that those things were going on. There wasn't any AIDS back then either, so taking that into consideration, I'd hopefully be much more careful.

Oh, I forgot to mention, I'm in jail now, living out the worst of my nightmares, trying to keep my nose clean and do my time without getting raped again, but that doesn't matter anymore, nothing matters anymore cause I've got another disease now too, AIDS. You see, they call it getting "turned out", when a new guy like me comes here, the wolves initiate you that way. That's what they call themselves by the way, wolves and the call the new guys like me chickens, wovles feed on chickens, so you get turned out, raped that is when you come in here. It doesn't happen to everyone, but it happens often enough that I'd say it's kind of an epidemic, it's often a racial thing too, if you know what I mean. Somebody getting you back for what society did to them or to their great, great, great, great grandpa.

Anyway, I guess I'll die in a couple of years or sooner maybe cause I don't think there's going to be a cure for this disease at least not in time for me. To put it mildly, this is really a drag and I think an injustice for me and about a million other guys like me, who got locked up for lighting up the wrong kind of cigarette, you know, the kind that's not government approved, the joint kind. After I got here I started reading and you know what, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson used to grow the stuff, Jefferson even used it to pay his taxes, it was used as a kind of kind of money as well as for making rope with back then. As far as I know, they never smoked it, I looked and looked and couldn't find any mention of them smoking it, too bad, that would have helped my argument if they had.

Well getting back to the point of all this, I said at the beginning that most everything has a beginning and an end, so this is how this book begins. You'll find out how it ends in about two hundred pages if you care to. I'm getting ready to tell you my lowly story, a kind of rags to riches to rags story, not too different than a million other rags to riches to rags stories, but it is a little different, so I hope you'll give it a read. I'm going to try not to gripe too much and to just stick to the facts, because I'm not blaming anyone else for this, afterall no one wants to listen to some schmuck bitch all day. But I do hope that after you read this, you'll be changed and not be so complacent about the things in life that aren't right, even though you've been told that they are.

Sharon loses the house and then the kids are taken away from her, since she has lost her job etc. In the background the Beatles Let it be is playing on the radio

"5". conclusion outcome

Final scene, Phil and Sharon meet again as they are inadvertently tethered together on a co-ed chain gang. Phil and Sharon both are dying from aids, they look at each other in disbelief. Phil asks her about the kids, she hysterically says they both got aids while in foster care and now Joey's dead and Sally's in an institution ready to die any day. The pair looks at a picture of the family in happier times that Sharon carries with her in the pocket next to her heart. The Pretenders song Chain Gang plays in the background. They are wacking weeds with sickles near the edge of a cliff and the other inmates are careful not to get too close, but Phil and Sharon, their faces scarred from the aids sores are drawn closer and closer to the cliffs. Their sickles swinging in harmony to the song, they are ready for the final harvest, they come to the very edge and hug each other one last time and then after a nod of acknowledgment of what they are doing, they jump, dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

A con named Willie, who had befriended Phil is ordered to help shovel them into body bags, their parts are mixed. "He was your buddy", the guard raged, "you clean it up". On the guard's radio the song He aint heavy he's my brother plays as Willie carries the bags to the coroner's wagon. (give me a break)

The sun sets on another California day. In the background the Beatles Let it be is playing on the radio as the credit begins to roll. As the end, Sophie B. Hawkins "As I lay me down to sleep" plays. (give me a break)

Phil is cryogenically frozen and then "resurrected" by a future society. He has flashbacks of his past life, including having buried a small fortune in gold coins. He needs them because he has been revived to become a member of the lower class fated to doing menial labor for the rest of his million year lifespan. He finally has a dream in which he remembers burying it in the basement of his old house, now he goes back to that spot to dig it up, only to find that there is a family living in the house. His genes and Sharon's are intermixed, causing him problems in the future.

There are several characters who sort of go through time cause their brains were cooled to near freezing and kept in a state of suspended animation for two hundred years. Phil is the most bizarre of them and this is an account of his experience in the 1990's and the 2190's. His brain of a yuppie in the 1990's becomes the brain of a man in the 2190's. In the 1990's Phil was a consultant and a "criminal" because of what he smoked.

In the 2190's in this new society, called itself heaven on earth because technology had largely taken the sting out of death, but they were a long way from it being like the Biblical heaven, though they had not given up on trying. The people still wondered what it was like on the other side and many had parents or other loved ones on the other side. Technology had even made inroads into that other dimension by sending volunteer scientists into death for a few minutes and then resuscitating them. There was beginning to be a body of evidence, but it still wasn't hard enough evidence for most people. People still needed to experience the near death experience themselves and there was a growing market for near death experience providers and guides, that would for a fee go along with you for the ride. Cross dimensional travel had become common through near death trips, LSD, peyote and mushrooms to name a few of the methods. There was still no proof positive about heaven and hell in the 1990's. People with near death experiences apparently had more positive ones than negative ones, but there certainly were those who thought they had been in hell or on their way there. Out in space there were sects of

pioneers who were opting to make their own utopias in the heavens. They organized along religion and or party lines and left earth en masse. Their satellites headed toward asteroids or planets or stars where they planned to make a better life away from the “heathens” on earth. And there were enclaves on earth that they kept in touch with, enclaves that shared their religious beliefs and that served as liason offices with the “secular” world and as small bastions of their power.

“So what does it all mean?”, Phil asked his counselor after his brain was put in the dead homeless man who was constitutionally guaranteed a new brain and had received the one Phil had in effect donated to science when he checked organ donor on his driver's license.

“Wha happens after death, where’s my soul, who was I, who am I?”, Phil Jr. asked the counselor who had been given the assignment of oriening Phil to his new world.

“We still have no concrete agreed upon evidence and conclusion about what happens”, the counselor said. “But there has been a lot written, please read this, it will give you the governments unofficial account of the state of the research into these areas”.

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features ten sets of horizontal dashed lines, each set consisting of three parallel lines. These lines are evenly spaced across the entire page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The background is white, and there are no margins or additional markings.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

"6"

THE ENTROPY AND THE ECSTASY

I like living where I do", said Phil, ""It's near my children."

"Isn't that awkward", said the interviewer, "I mean being near your ex-wife's house and having to deal with her."

"I don't mind", Phil said, "I'll always be in love with her, no matter what she thinks and I want the best for my kids, so that means I want the best for her too."

The interviewer looked surprised. "Well shoot, then why don't you two get back together, it sounds like you can save your marriage."

Phil wasn't so sure it could be saved, he hadn't been the most faithful guy in the world since their seperation, he hadn't even waited for the divorce to be final before he started fooling around.

That's between "she and me", said Phil in a poor imitation of a Bogart voice - there was no way he wanted to get into the details of his marriage, divorce or love life. As soon as they had seperated, he had begun hanging out in bars and playing the field as well as only hiring women now in hopes of a liason.

Phil had come to the conclusion that religious people from all backgrounds were equally bloodthirsty.

Sharon had flipped out the night before over him wanting to go smoke with a friend during an interfamily Ucher game.

Smoking was like going for a long relaxing drive a long road. The difference was that you didn't need to leave your chair to do it. "Lazy man, lazy, that's what you are", Sharon said as she saw Phil drag the shelves up the front steps of the house. "Damn things must weigh 35 pounds a piece", said Phil as he hauled the three boxes inside.

DON'T PLACE AN ORDER WITH THE NEW WORLD ORDER

(DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE)

What it boiled down to is that he wasn't going to make many more appologees and he wasn't going to let anyone tell him what to do - period.

He told the marriage counselor that he did some of his little "things", because he thought it would help keep their marriage alive. Unfortunately Sharon didn't always see the humor in his attempts and she saw what Phil was doing as playing mind games.

"You've changed so much, you're just not the same person that I married!", Sharon told Phil and the marriage counselor.

"I think I'm basically the same", Phil responded, "you may be a better judge of it than me, but I'm not going to let you be the judge, the man upstairs is the only one that really knows what's inside of either of us - he'll judge."

"I'm like you", Phil said to Sharon, "I just want to have my cake and eat it too." She was not impressed by his homespun wisdom. "I'll settle for less than that though, will you Phil?", her question unsettled him.

"Babe, I'm not trying to mess you up, but I'm planning on doing things my way for now on and no one's gonna stop me except with a bullet or something, this is declaration of Independence time! I hope that you'll stay by my side, but that's the way it's gonna be. I'm going back to my African roots or whatever you want to call it, but I'm coming out of my shell and praying to the God in Heaven that I do the right thing."

He believed that with a little bit of help from above, he might be able to survive the aches, pains and unseen ailments that he was beginning to suffer from and live till he was 100 years old. Really though, 50 years would be a pretty realistic life expectancy for him - if he didn't start eating less and living more healthfully. "Heck with a little help from above, I might even be cured from some of these pains." Melatonin?

"If there's a God who will save me if I believe in him in spite of my screwing up on an almost continual basis, then I should be okay - if not then I'm screwed."

Sharon was not impressed, "lighten up or at practice what you preach", she reminded him.

"Yeah, I'll come right out and say it. "I think that women and blacks are more emotional than white men and furthermore there are a lot more differences than that, but I won't mention any more. Call me racist or prejudice or whatever, I'm just speaking my mind! And you know what, you can't take it when I speak my mind! In fact it looks like you're getting ready to take a swing at me right now", Phil woke up with a start - another dream.

You always have to worried if you're really willing to speak your mind. "I could say one thing that I believe about blacks, women, left wing whites, right wing whites, asians and get my self killed."

"you never know where it's coming from said Vaughn, "so you can't worry about it, just say what you think about anyone or anything, you might not live as long, but you'll be a better off man for it."

"Just like me saying, I think that whites are generally smarter than blacks", Vaughn spoke, "I demand the right to be able to say that because I believe that and I am not ashamed of believing it."

By now Phil would have been shocked, if he didn't know Vaughn better.

"I also believe that blacks are superior to whites physically and that they should not be ashamed of it, in fact I think they're proud of it", Vaughn was verbally on a roll.

"And both races and everyone else has the right to his own beliefs about who he is, who his people are and who God is", that's the main thing I think that we need government for, just to ensure us the free exercise of those rights."

"I don't want a government that guarantees me or anyone else a free ride. Let's get rid of welfare now and deal with the consequences now, let's not pass this curse on to our children to have to tackle, let's take the leadership and be the generation that does it! Just guarantee everyone the right to do their own thing without interference from anyone - if and when they directly hurt someone else while doing this then prosecute them!" The basis of Vaughn's platform, would be in its simplest form, "no free ride and freedom of choice."

In addition, regarding trade with Japan, the Individuality party would not blame Japan and we would have the policy that it's no-body's fault but ours even though we can find lots of offenses to American ethics in the way the Japanese have conducted business with America. However! Since we have gotten ourselves into this mess, we must take very strong measures to get our selves out of this hole and that means definite quotas on Japanese goods and other actions at least until we are back on our feet and prospering! This is just basic self defense on a national economic level, in Phil's opinion this was just common sense. Phil liked the Japanese on a personal and business level, since he had found them as honorable as any Americans that he had dealt with, and since he had gotten into the consulting business, practically everyone was ethically cleaner than him.

Phil looked up at Vaughn and laughed, "and you'll probably change your mind on all this tomorrow anyway."

"Yeah, I might", Vaughn reacted defensively, "and if I do that's my right too!"

"As of now, I'm going to tell you guys the platform for the new "Individuality Party", Vaughn announced.

"I'm going to take on unfair Japanese trade practices head on and as a consultant to them Phil, your're just the guy to help me do it - if the public can forgive you for working for them."

Ordinarily Phil would have been raked with guilt and not wanted to discuss the subject, but today was different. He had just sworn off guilt and laid the burden down at Jesus's feet and asked for forgiveness and for Jesus to come into his life and give him the strength to stop consulting and work to succeed in some other job. A year or so later he had generally disavowed Christianity as possibly the most destructive human idea ever released on humanity.

He wasn't sure if he should just quit immediately or else phase it out quickly so that they wouldn't go broke and lose their home and other property.

Phil was guilty of working for the Japanese as a consultant and giving them market information to help them sell in the U.S.A., he had thus hurt American business and certain Americans on an individual basis, he knew he was accountable to these people and to the country. With his background of working for the Japanese, he knew a little about them and he didn't think that they were hatching some conspiracy to ruling or taking over the U.S.A. in any way, he thought instead that they just wanted full equality with Americans in terms of world power and prestige. These notions by Japan were in a lot of ways very threatening sounding to many Americans and possibly rightly so. In fact Phil acknowledged that he could be entirely wrong about the Japanese and though he doubted it, he admitted that it could be a Japanese conspiracy.

In any case - as for the consultant job, he would have to get out of it and do so as quickly as was realistically possible, it was just not right.

co

"Remember that one person can make a difference", Vaughn didn't say it, Phil just heard it coming from the radio as his friend rambled on.

"Talent on loan from God, we think that it's okay that you're saying that", said the caller on the talk radio show.

"I wonder what those callers would think of your ideas", Phil asked Vaughn, "I don't know", Vaughn replied without much concern, "It probably would depend on if they think that overall "I'm going their way or someone else's."

Just then there was a crash at the door and a SWAT team in green camouflage outfits broke in through the old wooden door.

"Okay, where's the weed!", the leader shouted as he burst in.

"Where's your brains!", Vaughn screamed back. It was not a good time to come crashing in on Vaughn, and not a good time to say that to Sgt. Spike.

"I don't say decriminalize pot", said Phil, "I'm only saying that from my own self interest I'd like to not have to worry about going to jail." "I'm not saying decriminalize it unless that's what society as a large democratically decides."

For now on Phil was going to be a lot more selective about the types of consulting projects he did.

He'd also leave the big cruise ship poster up in his office all the time, unless he had a Japanese client come over regarding market research and that had never happened in his four years of being in business for himself.

Maybe it would inspire him or help drum up cruise sale business. Whenever anyone came to his office, he could tell them that he was an agent for the thirty-five largest pleasure cruise companies in the world.

His goal was to phase out the market research as soon as possible especially the most worst types of projects, which he would not do anymore. He would also work hard on selling cruises, their income would probably drop and it would be okay if it did, but he was hoping to somehow have even a better year than the last.

He hoped that Sharon would not have to work, but she had said that she would do so readily if necessary and that was a relief at the moment.

Do the youngsters, especially the blacks know that some of those expensive basketball and tennis shoes are made in China, BY SLAVE LABOR.

In the long run, in almost every disagreement that we have, deep down inside, you think that you can claim the moral high ground for yourself and that leaves nothing left for us to discuss. "Well I'm here to tell you that you can take your moral high ground and keep it to yourself for now on because I will search for my own."

"You and everyone else can just stop saying, 'yeah, yeah, yeah, we hear what you're saying, but you don't know what your're talking about', cause I'm not listening anymore, I'll make my own decisions right ones and wrong ones."

For now on he'd say, "I'm sorry", few times and far between.

"I'm not 100% sure that I'm on the right side of the battle", Vaughn said, "but I'm 100% sure that I want to be on that side."

Sharon felt sure that Vaughn had truly snapped this time. "He thinks he's Jesus", she muttered. Vaughn heard this and replied, "no way", but I believe he's coming back and it's his side that I hope and pray that I'm on." I'd be real happy just to carry his dirty clothes.

Phil had to keep reminding himself to relax and to settle down, stop worrying. He had declared his independence from the world and now he could just live his life instead of spending all of his time being careful not to do anything to offend others. The task now was to just do it and do it right!

As far as smoking, he'd do it as little as possible, but he'd be the absolute decider of that in his life, as long as he didn't go to jail over it. That was the thing that he resented the most about the laws governing it and why that was one U.S. law that he wouldn't obey. You might say it was a case of whose ox was getting gored, but you could say that about the people on both sides of the issue.

Now he was getting a little bit of it for a friend and he was trying to decide whether or not to keep a pinch for himself as a little undiscussed payment for his middleman roll. He was on his was to meet this same friend and Phil had a little bit with him and that brought up the second quesiton. Should he give the friend a pinch hit of it now.

He knew that his buddy would only want one or two at the most so he decided to do it. This also made him feel like he was doing something to equal out the pinch he planned to take when he got it for Dan. All around a "greener" way of doing it, which was a bit surprising comming from a regular listener to the Number One conservative radio talk show in the world.

As it turned out the scenario unfolded perfectly, he shared a little with Dan and then Dan asked him to get him a little bit more. "I'll give you a nice pinch out of mine when I get it", Dan said.

Another thing Phil didn't want was for anyone to say the feel sorry for him. He didn't want onyones sympathy or their forced cures.

Phil was going to try to sell the consulting business for \$250,000. He felt different about selling his consulting business, than his father would feel about selling his. His father's business carried the family name in the company name, while Phil's name was not in his company name, GLOBE CONSULTING. Also Phil did a lot more things in his business that he was not proud of than his father did in his.

"I don't think that blacks are inferior and I don't dislike them, but I won't apologize for thinking about self defense. I have the right to protect my family and myself from anybody, black, white or whoever if I think they might try to hurt us", Phil told Vaughn this. He didn't go as far as Vaughn in his prejudices, but he did believe that blacks were more likely in some ways to threaten his family and in other ways whites were more threatening. Phil wasn't a bit shy in telling anyone who asked, that he would do his best "to let em have it", if they messed with his family - whoever they were.

"Women cause enough damage at home, I sure don't think that we can afford to have them in the workplace too", Vaughn's ideas were as usual 'just about off-the-wall' and Phil did not agree with him.

Like at GC, Phil was seeing that business conditions were changing dramatically and that he might get hurt if he continued doing his consulting. So he could feel depressed over the probable loss of this good paying job, or he could thank God that he was getting a little push to help him make the move.

Also he noticed a lot of great job possibilities that God had laid out in front of him. All of them were "cleaner ethically" and all had enough income potential to sustain them.

He would continue branching out into new fields of entrepreneurship. He had the consulting which he definitely wanted to phase out as soon as possible. He had two nice rental properties and hoped to get some more. He liked owning real estate, it was a "real" thing and come tough times, the equity in them would probably be worth more to his family than stocks, bonds or other assets that are represented by paper. Sure there was a company behind the stock or bond, but would it be around in 10 years and would it still be worth much. In the present recession, Phil knew that a lot of companies would go under and some of those might lose the pension funds of their elderly pensioners.

"Yeah, but none of us might be here in ten years anyway and even if you're here the mobs will take your house and money anyway", Sharon said.

Phil heard her but went on, "Yeah, I'll get into selling cruises and then package vacations and then finally make a million writing." That was what he really wanted to do most of all anyway. He loved having his own office too, it was like a headquarters and he sometimes imagined being Philip Marlowe from the Humphrey Bogart movies instead of Phil Glencoe, the kid from New Jersey. In his own office he could kick back and put his feet up on his desk or shadow box or exercise with the stereo on loud, or basically do whatever he wanted to do - this was to him one of the best benefits of being self employed. The worst part of it was that in his present consulting job, he was nothing but a con man.

He had to figure out ways of making money that didn't bother his conscience and he was thinking about it a lot. Finally another bright idea came to him.

That's what he'd do, he'd start a branch of GC in Japan and collect information on the Japanese market for his U.S. clients. In a way, he'd be like the trading companies, in that he'd collect information and also he'd be a sales agent for them. He'd just reverse the coin, he'd have an office in Japan that was supervised by an English speaker who knew how to speak Japanese and he'd have it staffed by Japanese. He'd use his U.S. office as a base for selling this service to U.S. companies. He knew what information the U.S. companies would need to crack Japanese markets and he'd get it for them at a price.

"Do you mind if I read more of your work", Sharon asked.

"We don't talk to each other enough and this way I'll know what's on your mind", she laughed, "you should already know what's on my mind, because I tell you." She didn't think he'd make much money if any writing, but it was an interesting concept.

"I don't mind, go ahead and read anything, just take it all with a grain of salt", he was glad that she wanted to read it, this way they really would be able to communicate better. Sharon was right about her telling him what she really wanted and what she really thought, she was just a very verbally oriented person and he wasn't. So if they didn't do something to improve their communication they would never really understand much about each other.

Reading his short stories would be the ideal way to communicate with her and about her. He wasn't as effective putting thoughts and feelings into words as he would like to be, so whenever they got into a serious discussion or an argument, his tongue didn't always project what he really meant to say. The darn thing would just run off at the mouth and get him in trouble before he even knew what had happened. When he wrote things, he had more time to think them out, so his thoughts were more likely to come out right.

"If you need to keep scrunching up your face in order to feel all your parts working then do it", that was one thing Phil had figured out today while smoking. Nothing profound, not even remotely, but smoking helped him to feel the parts of his body moving and working like a machine. A not so well oiled machine at this time. As an out of shape 35 year old, he noticed a few kinks and catches in his joints. By excersising his face and learning how to hold his jaw, Phil thought he could breath and hear better. Unfortunately he looked a little strange when he experimented with his body parts in public. Some folks get offended when they see kid's doing this - much less an adult. Phil didn't care anymore, he was going to do what he wanted to and stop letting anyone make his decisions for him any more.

"Yeah, I'll even start using that big front mollar to set my jaw so it will jut out like a movie star", Phil was thinking to himself more than a little in jest. Smoking pot usually made him "feel" more in touch with his body and he believed that he could tell that he could hear better and generally feel better when he juttet his lower jaw out as far a possible, like a full blown Hapsburg jaw.

Phil wondered sometimes about who he was as far as what his role in the everlasting theater of life and it was hard for him to know which member of the cast of characters he was. He really hoped that he could be a prophet of the good word and even a very minor one would be a great honor. He also hoped that he was not a prophet of evil and that if he were that he would be quickly struck down before he could do much damage.

THE NAIL THAT STICKS UP GETS HAMMERED

(Picture of Phil's head in a row of nails and a hammer coming down)

Phil as usual had a tear in his eye, Sharon might or might not, he did not know cause he couldn't look at her. The segment of 20/20 was about a Unitarian minister and his books about life such as All he knows he learned in kindergarten or something like that. Phil was touched and of course in his mind couldn't imagine how anyone else couldn't be. But then it all depends on where you're sitting to view something. As soon as the words Unitarian minister came out of Barbara Wlaters mouth, the man undoubtably lost a world of credibility in many peoples opnions, probably in Sharons(just as a tent show evangelist would to an agnostic). To Phil it seemed a statement of the obvious, just as the previous segment on the man disconnecting his commatose son from a respirator was, just as the ministers analogy of our lives being like the life of the itsy bitsy spider going up

the water spout and it's being washed down and it's trying again the next day when the sun comes out. It was all so perverse and all so simple and all so incomprehensible when we sit on opposite sides of the fence struggling like the car commercial that came on next, for the infinite quest for perfection.

Just learn from the kids when you can phil said, they sometimes know the answer to how to conduct ourselves, when

we don't. They take the natural course of action, while we often do what we think the people around us want us to do.

Not just in how to behave, but also in how to do things like walk and breath. Phill notice that Tyler always seemed to be pulling himself up tall and filling his lungs with a big blast of air. Just what he needed to face the giants he was surrounded by. Phil didn't recall many elderly people doing this, but the ones he'd seen were the most vibrant looking.

Phil also decided that he had to be as brutally honest as possible with the kids. So far he had tiptoed on the line of the truth and lies touching down often. He had to take responsibility for his decision to do the things he currently believed in like smoking and at least admit to his frailties to his children, even if it might not be the best thing to do. He still had to do what he thought was best and not some government or church prescribed law, just the 10 commandments

Vaughn's knee was feeling better since he smoked the weed. It still felt out of joint, but he was able to pull his foot up on his other knee and make it pop back in easier. Previously he had had so much trouble doing that, that he was considering having his knee operated on, now he didn't think he'd have to look into it. Vaughn (player that is same as Vaughn Van Lin Mar) always noticed improvements in his body and mind when he smoked just a little. But he eventually burns out from getting too much of a good thing.

He just had to be more assertive in the next year and go after the good things that he wanted. On the other hand, maybe he'd also try to get high a few times and maybe write more. That was the only way he was going to possibly achieve the goal he'd set in the resolution he'd told at the new years eve party. Hell, I'll just wait till I catch cancer from something in my food or in the air and then I can ask to have weed prescribed to me.

Vaughn was going to run on a platform, of taking the vote away from all women and from all men on public assistance. He reasoned that although the both might go completely nuts at the thought of someone mentioning this, it was the way things should be. Society would be better off not having these groups voting, for a number of very good reasons.

New years resolution for Phil, to start being a man. Despite the cliché sound of it, he thought it to be the most important thing. Stand up to Sharon, she might respect him for it she might divorce him for it, but he was resolving to do it. Women are fickle despite what they'd have us all believe. She might like him being the "man" of the house and being the undisputed leader. He knew he needed her advice and that he should take what she says very seriously, but he had had enough of being the subordinate under the law of the U.S.A. It was also time he thought as Vaughn had been telling him for a change in government. The only way to remove women's power over men and to eliminate the power of those permanently on public assistance was to vote them out or run them out. He didn't want to be treasonous, but that's what the current leaders who are kept in power by these two groups would call him. This in spite of the fact that when the republic was formed, women were not allowed to vote and there was no public assistance in the form of what there is today. With women alone over half of the voting population, there was no way to vote them out unless by their fickleness or wisdom they would vote themselves out of power. If that was the case, it wouldn't be necessary for the men to overthrow them. All that was necessary would be for the men in the army to do what the army in Romainia and elsewhere

had done. Then the cheap politicians would change their tune and vote sanity instead of the will of their illegal constituents. The 70's and 80's were the decades of women's lib, well as Phil and Vaughn saw it, the 90's would be the decade of men's liberation.

I've rarely seen you respond to situations, you just react Phil told Sharon. You're the proverbial atom bomb used on a fly.

Phil finished the dishes as Sharon applied her makeup, are you ready for church she yelled, yes he said, well get the kids ready she said. She was still getting ready, he was tired of doing house work which she assumed he should do as she put on her face. Do that during your optional time, he yelled back.

This old earth is being stretched to the breaking point by mankind, at the rate we're going, we'll destroy it as a habitat for all living things including ourselves. It seems like there's going to have to be a big die off or a big fly off of mankind eventually Phil said.

Phil said to Vaughn, did you ever notice how some women drivers stay on your tail no matter how fast you're going and then when you pull over and let them pass, they invariably slow down 5-10 mph and just sit there. It's like they've got to pass you but when they do, they've lost the gumption to keep going at a fast speed. Yea said Vaughn, I've seen those kinds of drivers and the rest of them just poke along at 55.

They don't have the killer instinct said Phil, they can't finish you off, they just pass you then block you till you have to pass them, it's like they're unconsciously playing a game, they want to get ahead but they don't really want to.

Yea we've got the killer instinct said Vaughn, it's just a male thing. Whether it's tennis or golf or football, we just want to crush someone. Yea said Phil, it must be a pretty basic male thing, cause when I get out of bed on the wrong side or see something I don't like on the news, I want to kill people sometimes lots of them or people close to me and I think I might really do it if I had the chance at some of those times. Yea guys are like that said Vaughn, we don't really feel that way very often but sometimes we do, women I don't think have an urge to wipe people out very often.

Phil was talking to his son, I've made a lot of mistakes he said. Most of them were moral or human mistakes, not technical mistakes or mistakes in calculations. No they've been mistakes in judgement that I feel bad about now.

The saddest moment that Phil could recall at the time was the moment when he was about 7 when it occurred to him that some day he might see his mother in a coffin or see a coffin and know that his mother who at that moment was the most important person or thing in his life, that she would be in it. Anybody who's had a loving mother, must arrive at that sickening moment of truth sometime. It's like in the song Circle be Unbroken.

The secretary at the telephone ans service in CA, sounded like she was experienced in the ways of the world and her voice was tough and smug. She knew that Phil wasn't really doing what he said he was doing and Phil knew she was on to what he was doing. But she didn't let on at least not to him and he figured her attitude was just her way of not letting the things that went on around her get to her, kind of like a bar manager.

"IT'S ALL THEIR FAULT"

You say I'm always talking down my society, that's because it's the only one I'm familiar with. If I was in some other society I'd criticize it,, if they'd let me. "I'm sure" said Vaughn, "that when the Soviets move into the U.S. in the late 1990's because we've caused our own collapse while strengthening them, they or their flunkies will take care of me anyway." Thats one of the great things about the U.S., all you have to worry about is if they'll publish your shit. Most likely they'll think it is shit and won't.

You say I'm showing my true colors and you criticize me for that. Maybe you should have interviewed me more thoroughly before we hitched up. Then you'd have realized that you weren't going to like my "true colors", becasue they don't agree with your true colors.

"You need to get your priorities in oreder", Sharon told Phil. "No you mean I need to make your priorities my priorities" said Phil. "I'm just trying to wrestle back for men the rights that women have extorted from us over the last 200 years, Washington would be rolling in his Mount Vernon grave if he could see what they've done to his country."

"You deride me for being two faced, while with you it's what you see is what you get", said Vaughn to Bill. "But I think it's more that with me there's more than meets the eye, you're just like all the other bloodthirsty sheep in your heard."

Why did the Hebrews all live to be 700 years old and their contemporaries in China, Babylonia, Egypt and elsewhere only live normal lifespans according to those societies records.

That's why I want a pastor who'll tackle tough questions with openness and honesty and not just placate with tired old platitudes. I don't want a pastor whose purpose is to sell afterlife insurance under the pretense of saving my soul. I don't want an apologetic who's a master at swimming in circles around questions and whose last resort is to accuse me of trying to be an intellectual if he can't answer a question.

"Just speak your mind", said Sharon. " It's hard for me to" said Phil, "when I'm surrounded by a monolithic block of like minded people who arrogantly assert that they "know it all" and that anyone who disagrees is damned. Many of whom look at you with scrunched up faces and narrowed eyes as if you're stupid, unpatriotic and a heathen if your not in their fold.

Phil had a chance in 9th grade ball he didn't hold a grudge against the coaches. They gave him a chance but they had to go with the kid most likely to help them win. That was Rick, smaller but quicker and more motivated than Phil was. Phil hung it up after 9th grade football but to some extent always regreted his lack of sports prowess and achievement like so many other would be jocks.

The only thing Sparky had in common with normal breeds of dogs was that she needed love. Other than that she was a different kind of critter than any dog Phil had ever had. So far she seemed dumber or else just much more stubborn. The kind of dog that in Jack London stories gets trained with a club.FC

I know whats right said Bill. Oh you certainly do said Vaughn and I'm sure you wouldn't hurt a flea unless he was preventing you from doing what's right, then you'd smash him or anyone else to bits.

You can try to pass on the wisdom of the ages to your kids and inevitably fail, because any one of us only can understand very small part of that truth. The best you can do is try to pass on all you can of a few of the very best examples of good that you personally have been exposed to. In Phil's life that was undoubtably the Gospel of Christ.

If the kids turned out okay, then that was great. If not then he hoped he could cope with the inevitable grief that would come with the kind of losses that parents often experience in their relationships and experiences with the children that they love and try to nurture.

He used to think that it was sufficient to just do his part and have kids and try his best to raise them. He hadn't changed much in the belief that this was more important than making it big in any other way.

"My beliefs seem to change almost daily", Phil told Sharon.

"I don't know if that is good or not" he told her. "I'm told by the religionists around me that I have to believe unequivicably in their unchangeable truths, but I'm having a hard time slipping away from my attraction to a certain amount of fuzzy logic."

You're all just slinging mud at each other, said Phil and you think that you're in the right to do it because your group has the biggest hands.

PHIL HAD JUST DONE A COUPLE OF ONE HITS WITH A VISITOR AND NOW WAS GETTING BACK TO WORK ON CLEANING THE APARTMENT, HE WANTED TO GET IT RENTED OUT AND IT WAS A HUGE MESS.

PHIL PLANNED ON LYING ABOUT WHAT HE WAS DOING IF SHARON ASKED.

SHARON WAS LIKELY TO BITE OFF HIS HEAD IF SHE CALLED THE APARTMENT AND SPOKE TO HIM ON THE PHONE WHEN HE WAS STONED. HE DECIDED IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HEAD OUT AND GET A BURGER INSTEAD AND THEN FINISH CLEANING THE REFRIGERATOR AND STOVE.

WHAT IT BOILED DOWN TO WAS THAT HE PRESENTLY COULD NOT SEEM TO MEET THEIR HIGH STANDARDS AND DIDN'T THINK IT LIKELY THAT HE EVER COULD, SO BE IT.

PHIL DIDN'T MIND TELLING SHARON THAT HE WANTED TO MAKE HIS LIVING AS A WRITER AND PAINTER.. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE SUCH NONSENSE THOUGH TO SHARON SINCE SHE HAD NEVER SEEN OR READ ANYTHING GOOD THAT PHIL HAD DONE. IS THAT STUPID BOOK YOU'RE WRITING AN AUTOBIOGRPHY SHE ASKED. "YES, I MEAN NO NOT ENTIRELY", HE ANSWERED HER.

AS FAR AS THE GIRLS HAVING SOME SAY IN THE NEW BUSINESS, PHIL DIDN'T MIND. THEY MIGHT AS WELL GET EVERYTHING OUT IN THE OPEN RIGHT NOW. IF THE GIRLS WERE KGOING JTO BE INVOLVED, THEY'D BETTER TALK ABOUT THE SPECIFICS NOW.. MAYBE HE AND JACK COULD SWITCH BACK AND FORTH EVERY YEAR OR TWO AS PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT AND THE GIRLS JCOULD TAKE TERMS BEING CEO AND TREASURER. THAT WAY THEY REASONED, IT WOULD BE A MINORITY OWNED BUSINESS,

SINCE SHARON AND KATHY WOULD HAVE 51% OWNERSHIP BETWEEN THEM AND PHIL AND JACK WOULD HAVE 49%.

EVERYONE WANTED TO BE IN ON IT, BECAUSE THEY ALL FELT THAT IT WAS GOING TO PROVIDE THEM WITH FINANCIAL SECURITY IF IT WORKED. THEY WERE ALSO A LITTLE WORRIED THAT IF THINGS WENT BUST THEY ALL LOOSE OUT. THIS MADE EVERYONE WANT TO HAVE A SAY IN THE BUSINESS'S MATTERS. "FINE" SAID PHIL, BUT THEN WE'RE ALL GOING TO HAVE TO SHARE THE RISK THE SAME TOO."

PHIL WAS FINALLY GETTING AROUND TO THE JOB AT HAND AFTER EATING HIS HARDEES LUNCH, CLEANING SOME WINDOWS AND WRITING SOME NONSENSE IN HIS ONGOING BOOK. HE DIDN'T MIND THAT SHARON KNEW ABOUT HIS BOOK, HE JUST WISHED THAT SHE'D NOT GO AROUND TELLING EVERYONE ELSE ABOUT PHIL'S PECULARITIES.

IF HE EVER STARTED MAKING A LIVING AT IT, SHE COULD TELL ANYONE SHE WANTED TO.

HE HAD CRANKED THE RADIO SO HE COULD BE ENTERTAINED WHILE HE CLEANED THE KITCHEN APPLIANCES. JUST THEN THE PASTOR WHO WAS INTERESTED IN THE APARTMENT KNOCKED ON THE DOOR. "COME IN" PHIL SHOUTED OVER THE MUSIC. THE PASTOR LOOKED DISAPPOINTED IN PHIL. "OH, SO YOU LIKE LOUD ROCK MUSIC" THE PASTOR SAID. HE WAS ABOUT 20 YEARS OLDER THAN PHIL AND THE GENERATION GAP WAS APPARENT. "I'LL BET YOU SMOKE POT TOO" THE PASTOR SAID AS HE SNIFFED THE STILL SMITTEN AIR. THAT'S KIND OF A PERSONAL QUESTION" SAID PHIL. HE WAS STARTING TO WONDER IF HE'D MADE THE RIGHT DECISION IN TELLING THE PASTOR THAT HE COULD RENT THE APARTMENT. THINGS COULD GET A LITTLE STICKY.

He got the apartment over his office ready to rent again, but he wondered would he end up renting it out or living in it himself this time.

"A lot of what you write is not suitable for our kids to read, how do you feel about that", Sharon said.

"I don't know about agreeing with that, but I'd be pretty limited if I had to write everything so that it's watered down enough to get past the PG-13 censors."

"You're ruining your health with that smoking", Bill said to Phil, "you'd better stop doing it!"

"Hey, mind your own business, I'll take care of my own health", Phil answered. He figured that Bill wanted to take care of his health by outlawing smoking, but he knew that Bill wouldn't be generous enough to also outlaw ocean dumping and air pollution - it all depended on who's ox is getting gored.

Phil thought he noticed that when he smoked, he could really "feel" his lungs working and thus could breathe better. Actually he was probably fooling himself since the smoking would sure take its toll on his lungs after a few years. Regardless of that, he still wanted the right to do his own thing.

"I think that a lot more people should be entrepreneurs, that would make everyone want to work harder, they'd also earn more for themselves and be more efficient than workers for a regular company."

Too many of us in America are now lazy, greedy and complacent because we've lost the entrepreneurial spirit that our foreparents had.

"I thought that women weren't in combat, partly because they were less likely to get suckered into going out and kill some old man or old woman's enemies on a mass scale", Vaughn said.

CLONE ME AGAIN SAM

Sharon came into the office using her key.

"How much did you smoke?", Sharon asked Phil.

He tried not to react negatively, but sometimes he felt that she checked up on him too much.

"Just the right amount", he replied with a deadpan look on his non-descript face.

"You know that I was out there knocking on the door for five minutes before I came in", she said, "I could hear your stereo blaring from out here, but you had no idea I was even there!."

Sharon was concerned that he was losing business because of some of his "bad habits" and felt it necessary to chastize him.

He had in fact been doing a lot of productive that morning so he felt a little defensive. He had first changed the advertising sign outside his office, bought 6 nice office chairs at a closeout sale, developed the beginnings of a marketing strategy for his latest business idea, called the CPA and done a number of other chores too.

But just shortly before she had arrived, he had started working on the word processor on his new short story. He was going to call this one "subconscious fears", because it was about the hidden fears that we all have. It focused on fears that are based on the upbringing, schooling, churching and other indoctrination that we receive in our formative years. The story was about a character whose tragic life was affected by his prejudices and preconceptions that shadowed him every day and every step of his life.

Phil felt that sometimes smoking seemed to strip this baggage away and let his natural untethered mind emerge, all flags flying high.

As a budding entrepreneur, Phil was always dreaming up a new business opportunity to try and so far his ideas were not yet bearing fruit.

Since there was a long, bitter recession in progress, Sharon didn't want Phil to fool around. His working hard at something lucrative was extremely important to the family. Of course she could work too, but it was unlikely that she could make as much as he had in the last three years as a consultant. This made her even more determined to make him tow the line.

"If you don't like the way I'm doing my job, I'll take equal responsibility for taking care of the kids - day and night", Phil told Sharon.

"I don't think you know what you'd be getting yourself into", she replied, not believing for a minute that he was really capable or willing to do it.

"I don't mind answering your questions, if you're interested in having a conversation with me, but if you're checking up on me - don't ask!", Phil was adamant.

"As far as I'm concerned, from now on I'm going to live life like it's one big part!", Phil announced, "all those Preachers keep telling us that the world's going to end in a few years at the most anyway."

Sharon was as usual appalled at him, but by now quite used to what she saw as his nonsense. "Yeah that's real mature", she retorted.

Phil wasn't concerned with being "quote" mature. He could think of several reasons for taking this new attitude. For starters Sharon was right, it was immature, he noticed however that most children would be thrilled to live each day of their life like it was a party and it wasn't till they "matured" that they lost this enthusiasm for life. Well Phil wanted to regain a little of that enthusiasm and if learning from the wisdom of children was a way to, then he would listen to the children.

He wanted to "put away the alienation and get on with the fascination" as he remembered the popular song saying.

How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat.

Phil blew up at the poor, innocent postal clerk, "what do you mean I can't have my mail, first it's a month late then I can't even have it!", you'd better hand it over right now!"

The postal employee looked at Phil, you didn't use your nine digit zip code", she proclaimed to him, "that's why it's late."

Her tone of voice was like the drone of a bumblebee. Phil got even hotter, "that's what you guys always say, I think you invented the nine digit zip code just so that you could have a reason to blame the customers for your incompetence!"

Phil was on his "soap box" again and he could be a little hateful at times. The post office was one of his usual targets along with truckdrivers, pastors and any others that had an attitude that they were always right.

Phil didn't think it was hard getting good employees. He thought that anyone would make a good employee if they were treated well. How did some of these jobs create such poor attitudes among their workers?

"I was a 'heathen', before you married me and that's what I'm gonna be for now on", he was brandishing his tongue like a sword. "You and others have tried to make me walk the straight and narrow as you see it and I'm opting out right now." He was not going to follow any leaders and watch the parking meters, 'I am what I am' would be his new motto, following popeye or God or whoever said that first.

And then there was Vaughn, he had a messiah complex, or at least wanted to be the dominant historical figure of the age.

"You're nuts", Phil told him, "it sounds like you think that you're the freakin savior of the world - are you one of these guys that thinks he's Jesus or something?"

Vaughn was not upset, he had been expecting Phil to bring up the subject, after all he did have far greater aspirations than Phil ever would. "Of course not", he replied, "I don't expect to be around here for 1,000 years like Jesus will, I just plan on being a major force for the next 30 or 40."

He was going to fire all his "guns at once and explode into space."

"Well despite whatever you think, you're not who you think you are", Phil said raising his voice.

"You're not Jesus cause he'd never lie and God knows you're a liar and you know what, you're not and never will be even the great communicator that you think you are, you're just a miserable failure."

Despite a little anguish in his eyes, Vaughn tried to respond coolly to Phil's attack. He chose to hit Phil where it would hurt.

"So what is the message of the book you're trying to write", Vaughn asked Phil.

"It's trust Jesus!", Phil replied excitedly, "you and a lot of other people won't believe it, but that's the message and I mean it whether you believe it or not." Later he lost this sense of trust.

"Well obviously no one will believe it", Vaughn said with a cruel laugh, "you're such a joke you'll never be taken seriously either."

In their hearts, both men were very scared and doubtful of their abilities, but at least Phil was sincere, it was harder to know about Vaughn. "I don't want to be Jesus", said Vaughn, "I just want to be on his side." Phil grimaced a little, to him all such talk bordered on blasphemy, later it would not matter so much to him after he had read Wilson's book on Jesus and other critical examinations of his life.

The mood changed, both men realized they were more alike than they were different and there was a collective sigh of relief. "Well look Phil, you've been here a long time", Vaughn said with a smile, "you'd better get back home before Sharon starts to worry about where you are, she might think you're out fooling around."

"My wife doesn't even like me", said Phil in response, "in fact she thinks I'm the scum of the earth, but man she sure gets jealous if she thinks some other woman might like me."

Phil drove back to the office and got to work. Soon the phone rang and it was a woman interested in renting the upstairs apartment. She wanted to set up a time to look at the apartment and she wanted to come over right away.

Phil worked on the new liability release form that he needed for the travel agency. He hoped that it would protect him as much as an errors and omissions insurance policy and he knew it would be a lot cheaper - as long as he never really needed it.

Within 15 minutes, Phil heard a car arrive outside and figured it was the woman who had called about the apartment. She knocked at the door and came in along with her female companion. Phil figured that she had been apprehensive about coming over alone.

He gave her the five minute tour around the apartment and she seemed very interested.

"I'll hardly ever be here, I only need the apartment for sleeping in", said the attractive potential female renter. Phil wondered if she may have made a Freudian slip with that remark. In general she seemed very interested in the apartment and Phil looked her over intently, wondering if she would be in his life in the future. If he ever got thrown out of his house he knew he would move into his small office and of course the only bedroom was in the apartment that this nice young lady was considering.

At home that night Phil and Sharon discussed the apartment and the kind of people that had come to see it that day.

"Well I think it's better not to rent the apartment to a girl", said Sharon, "it's not that I don't trust you, it's just that I don't trust you or anyone 100%."

Their money was slowly being drained away by various living expenses and it seemed to Phil like sand in an hourglass running out. He was going to have to get some cash flow fast. The market research he did had been the most profitable business he'd ever been in, but now more than ever it "flew in the face" of his business morals. He had told more lies in the last four years of being a consultant for the Japanese, than he had in the rest of his entire life.

Phil realized that for the past 8 years, he had become a fat, lying, money making machine. He wanted to change into a slim, honest writing machine, but practicality dictated that he still had to bring home a regular paycheck.

ENTROPY

With the discovery of the problems of silicone implants, Phil figured that flat chested was going to be coming back in style.

Phil noticed that if he inhaled slowly through his nose as he took a drag, it mixed cool air with the hot smoke and seemed to make it easier on his throat. As it was now, he already usually stopped inhaling the smoke as soon as he felt any burning in his throat.

"I don't care if anyone we know reads this stuff", Phil announced, "I'd rather it be making enough money so that I can move out of town if necessary - then the locals can read it!"

"I'll be in when I'm in", said the new telemarketer that Phil had hired. "I'm busy today so I'll just come in when I have time in a couple of days."

"You'll be in when you're in my ass!", replied Phil with his voice rising in volume and annoyance, "you'll be out when you're in, cause you're fired." Saying those words felt good and bad at the same time for Phil. He'd never thought that he'd use that tone of voice with an employee or even say the words "you're fired", but that time had come this day.

"For now on I'm counting on the Lord to sustain me, not the Japanese anymore!" He went on, "for now on I'm gonna focus my efforts on the cruise business and on writing." For now on the consulting would be the sideline business, come hell or highwater, he would not be dependent on the market research business.

"The difference between you and me", Phil told Jack, "is that I can handle strong cigarettes and you can't." That's what Phil thought his smoke was anyway, just the strongest of smokes. Damn near able to knock you on your ass if you smoked one or two right after another, regular cigarettes didn't have the kick to do this. But there were other differences too, he wasn't sure about all of them though because he had only smoked regular cigarettes twice in his life. Strong smokes kicked your ass so much that you might feel like your going to die, which is good to feel once in a while. It makes you really, really realize that you're only mortal and will physically die some day. Otherwise some people never ever experience that reality until right near the end. That's okay too, but it tends to lead to "the big head."

The strong smokes could seem to stop your heart for a beat or two, which of course is dangerous so the anti forces would use that as one of their reasons for banning it. There were lots of other things that can also stop your heart, looking at the man in the mirror is one of them.

Personally he liked to be reminded of his own mortality several times a day if possible, but would settle for less.

Sharon on the other hand didn't want to be reminded about it period.

The phone rang and he knew it would be Sharon asking why he wasn't home, since it was 5:30 like they'd agreed. He'd better hurry, but the reason he went to the office to do his things, was that he didn't feel comfortable doing them at home. This was too bad and would change in the near future.

She thought the office was a place to work, but he thought of it as a place to have a smoke, put his feet up, listen to the radio loud, write, paint, do some fix-er-up work in the garage etc. In the future, he planned on playing the stereo loud and having a good time, after all, he was planning on selling cruises and vacations. Why not have his office a fun place for him to be - as long as he made some sales that way.

"I disagree", said Phil to Vaughn, "smoking should not be allowed in public places, if people are in close quarters with one another. This country's in bad enough shape without having a million non-smokers driving around with contact highs. Other than that, I think it's a less dangerous substance than either alcohol or tobacco and they can't tell me what I can put into my pipe and what I can't"

"Yeah", rebounded Vaughn, "let them stuff that in their pipe and smoke it."

"I'm not that patriotic", Phil told Jack, "I won't pay \$ 550 for a 27 inch American made color TV when I can get the Japanese equivalent for \$283."

"You're just not patriotic at all", Jack replied obviously irritated by Phil's opinion, especially in light of what Phil's consulting job."

"That's your opinion", said Phil, "if they cost the same or even if they were close in price I'd buy American, but in this case at least, it's getting ridiculous."

Sharon was amazed upon coming to the office and finding Phil in the arms of Mrs. Lamb from the school PTA. Of all the women for Phil to be involved with, Mrs. Lamb the oldest of the PTA regular's would have been her last guess.

"I agree with you that there is only one God", said Phil and I also believe that Jesus is the one and only true way, but that's where we part paths." He would retract these words about a year later.

The Pastor looked down at Phil, he was a huge man and he twitched uncomfortably as he listened.

"I'm not sure that I believe a lot of the rest of what you're teaching", Phil continued, in his usual brief conversational way.

The Pastor was not a very understanding man when it came to any opinion that contradicted his, "well I guess it really doesn't matter what you or I believe, it's what God 'knows' we believe that counts he'll sort us all out on judgement away", he said.

"I think that I have a God given right to grow and smoke my own stuff whatever that may be", Phil said.

The Pastor's eyebrows raised into a classical arch, "obviously the government doesn't agree with that and the church doesn't either."

"That's just something I'll have to deal with", replied Phil with confidence. "Someday the shoe may be on the other foot!."

We'll talk about this in court someday", said Phil. He hoped that someday, a man would be free to do this thing without interference from the state, church or anyone else.

"You'd better be ready, willing and able", the Pastor said in conclusion.

Phil and his contact met at the dimly lit corner, "Led" said Phil to the man, assuming that this was his connection.

"Zep", said the thin man, confirming that he was the man.

He spent most of his time doing boring, inane tasks - most of them thrust on him by others, like salesmen, bankers, the IRS.

Now for the first time, he was trying to use the new microcassette player to enter a story into the computer file would it work well?

..."Well", Phil told the dentist, "I'll be able to afford to have those crowns put on my teeth as soon as you and a few of your friends buy cruises or vacations from me." The microcassette and the foot pedal control seemed to be working great, he just would wait and do more when he got home. In the meantime, he'd have to figure out a system for remembering what had just been recorded so that he wouldn't accidentally record over it.

He had gotten about ten minutes into the 90 minute tape, so maybe he could just flip it over and record on one side and keep this side how it was so that he would record over anything before it had been transferred to the computer. After more consideration, he decided instead to use the tape counter and figure out a more scientific and efficient way of doing it. Flipping it over would not work well because he would have to do a great deal of rewinding at times. He might be able to do it some other way, like having two tapes in operation at all times, one for recording on and one for recording from. He finally would select a combination of both techniques.

Phil realized that Sharon was very angry with him and she surely had shown it by throwing a brownie at him last night. The package had flown past him at 80 miles an hour and hit the miniblind over the

window. He believed that unfortunately things were happening too fast for her to handle. The changes in their lives, especially the things that he was doing as a "born again man" were driving her crazy.

For his part, Phil felt sorry for her, but he was not going to go back to the 9-5 office job lifestyle. She was acting like a nut because of the smoking situation and because of the overall lifestyle changes they were going through. He was a little surprised at how negatively she had reacted to the recorder, but in her present emotional state it was probably normal.

Getting back to the microcassette recorder, Phil was finding that it was a good idea to put the wrist strap through his button hole and button his shirt so that if he bent over the expensive little recorder would not fall out and hit the floor. As extra insurance and secrecy, he would wear a loose knit sweater over his shirt, weather permitting.

This way he could put it on voice activation if he wanted to tape a conversation or manual if not.

He was trying to think of things that he'd helped the children learn, things that he would not receive credit for if they split. Obviously, he would instead receive "credit" for anything that had gone wrong in their lives. He could not think of more than a few things at the moment, but he would list them anyway:

1. Trying to teach them to be careful about all of their vital parts all the time, especially when playing rough.
2. Driving defensively all the time and wearing their seatbelts.
3. Believing in God and following the dictates of their own consciences to a great extent in worshipping God.
4. Mind your own business about other peoples private affairs and fully expect others to accord you the same consideration.
5. Don't ever trip, or sneak up and push old guys like your dad, mom or grandparents!

The other things would come back a little at a time to him, but might never reach Jeoy and Sally's tender ears.

The kitchen door opened and Sharon walked in, she was hotter than fire and stormed into the room. "I don't want to live in that new house with you", she raged, "I want to put it on the market instead!"

Because of her outburst last night and her other tantrums, Phil had kind of been expecting her to say this. "Well you do what you want to do", he said calmly, "I'm sure you must think you're doing what's right for you and the children, so I'm not going to stand in your way." He just hoped that she wouldn't try to destroy his relationships with the children, but he had no idea how she'd react.

"Why do I do it?", he asked her rhetorically, "let's just say I do it because it makes me feel back on the ground." He had tried to explain it to her a dozen times at least and never had any success. She had tried it a few times and it did not agree with her. It really bothered her that she did it, so she couldn't understand why he wanted to do it.

"Oh that's a new one, a stupid one but a new one", she admonished him.

"Last time you said you did it because it takes the edge off and now it's because it makes you feel back on the ground."

She was angry again, which was pretty normal these last few weeks.

"Well I think I'll go get a prescription for valium!", she said shocking Phil.

"How would you feel about that", she said. He thought she was taunting him. "If you need it fine, but if you're going to do just for revenge against me then I think you're nuts."

"Well I'm under stress too and maybe I need something for it." He started to think that she was being serious or at least half serious.

"If you're under stress you'd be better off smoking...", she cut him off - "at least this is legal!." There it was again, that legal business.

He didn't do well in arguments against her, he had about as much chance as a snowball in hell, which is what he often felt like anyway.

"and at least it's legal."

He was getting used to using the recorder now and he understood it's features much better than he had last week. Even his deftness on the tiny control buttons had improved significantly. This despite the fact that he'd only picked it up for about five minutes all week end.

The microrecorder had a funny feature that kept Phil amused. When he put it on "play" and pressed fast forward at the same time, he sounded like Alvin the chipmunk. This helped remind Phil of the relative unimportance of what he had to say.

The little cat tried to follow him in and he shooed it away with his foot. He didn't know who the cat belonged to - possibly it was the new renter who had moved in upstairs.

In any case Phil wanted to keep it out of the garage, where he had found it once already. He liked cats, but he didn't want it in the garage or in the apartment and surely not in his office. He didn't mind knowing a cat, but he didn't want to own one. It seemed that owning cats was a little harder than owning dogs. Dogs you could feel like absolute ruler over without abusing them, cats allow you to get to know them, but rarely do they submit to a humans will.

They were getting back to the question of why he smoked. He knew that she had some idea how it felt because she had done it a few times herself, most recently just one or two weeks ago. Obviously she didn't like the feeling or thought it was too intoxicating or something.

"I don't know why you have to do it so much", she said.

She really felt that he would let his job go down the drain and that he wouldn't be able to support her and the childre.

"I'm still doing what's necessary to help raise and support the family", he rebutted. He was not going to let anyone tell him how to live his life or how much of it to smoke. She was right, in that he was no longer working like a dog on the phone and computer to put out market research reports for the Japanese

companies. Instead he was doing enough to get some orders as well as working on the travel consulting business. He was already frenzied enough at work between the two or three business that he was trying to run. He felt like he'd been on a monkey grinder chain for too long and now would play his own tunes in life.

He figured that part of the reason that she didn't like for him to do it, was that it effected her head about the same way that it did his. She didn't like to think any other way than the way she had been brought up to think - she sliced the end of the ham off because her parents had and their parents had as the saying goes. He enjoyed thinking about new things, even if they were sometimes strange thoughts at first. With a little analysis he could cope with them, so far she could not and she took the age old approach of screaming blasphemy at any ideas that did not jive with her people's ideas.

"Hey!", he said irritatedly, "you're f---ing lunny and I'm not under your 'jurisdiction' anyway, so don't tell me a damn thing about what to do!"

"I expect to make at least \$50,000 after taxes this year", said Phil. This was about half of what he'd average for the last 3 years, so his girlfriend of ten years Sharon was not thrilled.

They were spending an average of \$6,000 per month, which added up to \$72,000 per year. "Stupid", she said, "we spent \$72,000 last year and you're only going to work hard enough to earn \$50,000 - don't you realize that we'll be \$22,000 in the hole!"

"That's where our savings, realestate and you come in", he said smugly, stoking the smoldering fire inside of her.

Where there's fire there's smoke and smoke certainly provided an attitude adjustment for Phil. It didn't, however seem to make you unaware of the consequences of your actions. Phil and Sharon had been talking in bed about various affairs they knew about and he had mentioned that he had never been propositioned by a naked woman. He told her that he wasn't sure how he'd react to such a situation under the influence of alcohol or smoke, but he thught he'd be able to resist getting into trouble. He believed though, that he'd be in more danger of doing the wrong thing under alcohol, because of it's more powerful inhibition blocking effect.

He was hoping that it would also be effective in helping him reduce his intake of caffeine, calories, cholesterol, alcohol and a few other things. So far it seemed to be having a positive effect on these things if not on others, he had lost about ten pounds in the last month.

Phil's mind wandered off to a hypothetical daydreamland.

One reason he smoked was because he was borderline artsy craftsy and it helped him feel more like he really was an artist. That's what he had wanted to be since he was a junior high schooler reading Hemingway stories in enlishand wishing that he could also hook up to a keyboard and pour out stories that other people would pay to read. Another reason he smoked, was that it made him scatter brained, which brought him down to Sharons level.

"Lighten up brother", Phil told the pastor, "why don't you try to love your brother more and preach to him less!" The pastor was indignant about the subject of smoking as usual and would not even consider that another point of view might have some validity. Phil didn't want to rain on the old man's parade, but he had, had enough of the pastors old message threatening him with fire and brimstone if he didn't

tow the line. It was an effective message largely because it scared the hell out of people. Phil just wanted the right to do his own thing, he didn't agree that smoke was a necessary religious sacrament, but he demanded the right to use it for the same personal choice reasons that allow people to use coffee and it's caffiene, tobacco and alcohol.

It was all related to the song about a brick in the wall, society was forcing us all to be another brick in the wall, but by now we have learned that one and one isn't always two.

"You've so called saved enough souls already with your message that everyone has to do things your way or burn forever, everyone knows your 'line'. Heck if what you've been saying is all true, then you're going to be wearing a million crowns in heaven anyway!"

The pastor was fit to be tried and his face showed it. "I'll never be satisfied with the number of souls I save", he ranted. "Oh, well, then I guess we'll NEVER have any peace and quiet when you come around." The pastor's approach to heaven was like some giant pyramid marketing program, the more people you saved and then had working under your auspices to save others, the more glory you'd have in heaven. Kind of like a giant Amway in the sky.

Women live for love Phil thought, but men live for everything else too. They aren't as much prisoners to their emotions and one thing that the Bible said that he certainly agreed with was that the man should be the leader. Women tended to talk more profusely than men and this hindered them. When it get's right down to it, you have to eventually stop talking and get down to work. In his limited experience, he noted that many women and lots of men fell into the trap of talking too much and doing too little. Because of this they never accomplished what they wanted to in life. Phil on the other hand wasted his time in front of the one eyed monster called TV which was the major hinderence to accomplishing anything in his life.

...And lawyers, yes lawyers, they had survived history intact and were the pharasees of the 20th century. They made so many laws that no one could obey them all and only the lawyers could interpret them. Doctors were about the same as they had been throughout history, just more so. In other words, they needed the hyprocatic oath now more than ever to keep them from thinking that they were little Gods.

A few of us however had been born again and were now free as the fucking breeze. He took another drag and this one he inhaled into the left side of his throat, lungs, sinuses and head. Ten minutes later he did a second one and it was directed down the right side of the throat to stimulate that side of the body a little more.

Sharons concerns were very real and quite logical for her to have, but Phil still believed unequivically that he was the one that had to be in the drivers seat. He was a critic, a writer and as the button said, sent here to be an observer.

Phil was smiling like the Cheshire cat, his cruise association starter package had finally arrived. This was the second time it had been sent, but apparently it had been stolen after the UPS man had left it on the porch and it had had to be resent.

He was spreading out the cruise brochures that had come with the training videos, logos and other material. He took out the new red self-inking stamper and had a field day putting his new company's stamp on dozens of brochures.

He couldn't accept them as God's representatives on earth and he wasn't ashamed to say it or anything else about them and their religions.

He looked up the phone number of the huge credit card company in the phone book and it was 266-6666 which of course was the number of the beast written twice. Was this a warning not to go down the path of bringing these universal number credit cards into his business. He wasn't sure, but he felt like he virtually had to call and request information. If he was to succeed with the travel consulting company, his customers would have to pay him and most would want to use credit cards. Phil thought to himself, "every knee, including mine shall bow to the God of the Israelites, his prophets predicted this three thousand years ago."

The pastor was not calming down, "anyone who promotes smoking that stuff will burn forever in hell!"

Phil wasn't sure if the pastor was right but believed that he might be and he answered, "I am not promoting it for anyone, I'm just admitting that I do it."

"In fact, I'm not even asking for you and the government to allow me to do it, that's none of my business, since I don't acknowledge either one of you."

"Well then you'd better get ready to pay some hard time", the pastor retorted.

"I'll face you or the government when they come for me the best way I know how", said Phil with visions of big mean men named Leroy and Bubba dancing through his head.

"Don't you see that it's an addiction", said the pastor, "it's a simple exponential line graph type thing. You'll use more and more of it till you destroy yourself or your family."

"It may or may not be as cut and dry as you say so I'll wait till I see it that way to go for the help your prescribing - if that ever happens", Phil had thought about this next point a lot. "And as for destroying my family I'll just pray to abba father in Heaven that no harm of any kind ever comes to them, since they are all inocent. I believe that their lives and safety are in Gods big strong hands, all I can do is teach them to watch out for themselves as best they can."

Phil adjusted his chair and put his feet up on the computer desk.

This was a new sitting position for him, since his feet were now up on the left corner of the desk compared to the usual right hand side.

It was a much better position for him to see the computer screen and whatever material was clamped up on the pad holder for him to type.

The strain on his back went away when he sat this way.

"You're an outlaw", said the preacher softly and he went on out the door. Phil wondered if the man would report him to the police, but the thought was dismissed after only a second, it didn't really make any difference.

"An outlaw?", he kind of liked that! An outlaw in the best tradition of Robin Hood. Hopefully less violent, but believing in the same ideas of standing up to authority and living on the run if necessary. Life would be a perpetual holiday on the run, with his partners and his pipe, he'd live everyday like it was going to be his last day on earth.

He had to tell Sharon that he would only work "so hard" on the old consulting for the Japanese business, it was just too much bullshit in a number of ways. Of all the things that he did in life, this was the one that bothered his conscience the most. He had few true regrets in life other than this, so he was going to

have to phase it out and he would do this largely by just neglecting it and concentrating on other things. If he didn't end it in this way, then his efforts in sustaining the company could drag on forever. He'd rather milk it and the wealthy Japanese companies for all that he could get as long as he needed it and burn his bridges down as he went along. He felt bad about this too and would go even farther and try to start a new business with the Japanese. This would be to find U.S. parts and service companies that the new Japanese transplants needed in the U.S.A. He figured that this way he might be able to continue to make a living from the money of the Japanese, but he'd be doing something that he thought was more positive.

"How much did you smoke this morning at work", asked Sharon. "I don't want to discuss that with you, but I'll tell you how much coffee I drank or how much I weighed this morning. He had told her that he felt he would be able to cut down on coffee and loose weight and this morning he was down to 214 pounds and had only had one and a half cups of coffee all morning. On the radio in the background the voice said, "Love me two times, I'm going away."

He suddenly realized how casually dressed he could be in his new line of work as vacation consultant. He could wear blue jeans as much as he wanted to. Selling cruises and package vacations seemed like the perfect job, he'd be selling a product that people were interested in hearing about and it was nearly foolproof, since he wasn't involved in providing the actual cruise. The only problem with being a professional cruiser, was that it combined his idealic lifestyle with his historic fear, the fear of sharks.

Another thing that came to him that morning was that he and Sharon were blood brother and sister as well as husband and wife. They definitely had exchanged a little of each others blood and with it microorganisms and genes. No wonder married people start to look like each other after a number of years.

Last time around he had thrown out all of his shortstory material, his pipe, his scales and artwork, this time he would throw out his market research report materials and start from scratch again.

The "establishment", which Phil interpreted to mean the "world", includes the government, the mores and the dominant religious establishments of any given society. In the western world, the establishment meant a democratic form of government characterized by a huge, inefficient bureaucracy, the mores of the society and the leader in that department, the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders.

Phil was none of the above religions, but close in many ways to each of them. He pondered over a label for what he believed in, because the "world" was so big on labels. Finally, he decided that since no one would believe him anyway, he'd just let them affix their own labels on the beliefs. The closest label for his beliefs that he could think of was, "non-orthodox Christian", but he knew they'd twist this around in a negative way.

It occurred to him one day that the reason he liked Zeppelin music a lot was that it had the same wailing quality as Arabic music, so maybe both were in his blood. The establishment didn't like either rock music or the Arabs, both represented anti-establishment views and of course this could not be tolerated, so the establishment persecuted both people and their views.

It seemed a little ironic that he was moving and starting a new business simultaneously. It also seemed ironic that when the cash and credit society finally bites the dust, it would be replaced with a barteroriented society. At least things would return to "scale" this way, since people would be more likely to be paid what they're really worth.

AND THE BEAT GOES ON

ARTSY CRAFTSY (ARTSY = WRITING, PAINTING, MUSIC; CRAFTSY = WOODWORKING AND METALWORKING)

"Why have you waited so long to grow your hair long", the swami asked Phil. "I would have grown it long, a long time ago, except there's always been someone telling me that I couldn't."

"Well now those days are gone, because I've told all those people that I don't give a flying _____. Now I finally have the freedom to grow it long if I want to, so occasionally I do!"

The cruise business was casual and Phil was glad it was. He tried his best to keep his hair neat and combed and his clothes clean. Other than that however he renigged all responsibilities. He kept his shirt untucked because that's how it always ended anyway and he had an eclectic wardrobe that didn't always make sense to people. It seemed likely that this older lady was not going to see eye to eye with him.

What the cigarette was actually, was a tiny pipe and any type of tobacco or smoke could be enjoyed with it. It was the most efficient pipe that Phil had every used. "When I hit the jackpot, I want to take a cruise around the world", Phil said in a leading way to the client. The computer keyboard slipped and fell at this exact moment and crashed down onto the desk, fortunately Phil had left a composition book under it, so it did not break.

The cruise customer left and Phil decided it would be a good idea to go through a stretching routine on the carpeted floor of his office. He was reaching some stretching records now, that were unbeatable by him 10 years ago, but he still hadn't made a dent in loosing the sixty pounds he'd gained since his college days. Now all he needed was a micro notebook computer that he could sling around his neck like a mini keyboard. With that and his microcassete recorder, he would be equipped at all times to, ply his real trade.

"Of course it looks like I never do anything around here, it's because I'm the president, janitor, handyman, gardener and the only salesman", said Phil. He was determined to do things his way, he felt he was entitled to that.

"The definition of a lousy consultant is contained in the word consultant", said Vaughn. "It's con, as in con man, because he takes you to the cleaners."

Phil was not amused at Vaughn, but he kept listening.

"A lousy consultant gives you advice, designed so that if you follow it, you'll line his pockets, not your own."

Of course not all consultants fit into this catagory and Phil didn't know exactly how he ranked. He hoped that as a cruise consultant he'd fall into a different catagory. He also however planned on charging more, because he was a consultant and not "just" a travel agent and being the kind of guy he was, he didn't want to pass up anything.

He saw himself as more of a story teller and if the Japanese wanted to pay him good money for telling them stories about the U.S. market for carparts or machines, he would spin them as much yarn as they could buy.

Phil vacuumed behind his computer hutch and in lots of other places in the office that had been neglected for two years. Behind his desk there were so many cobwebs, that it looked like a habitat for spiders and dustmites. He imagined the little dustmites based on the pictures he'd seen in some of the vacuum cleaner sales advertisements. They looked like tiny devils coming to prey on people, in the highly magnified pictures and he sucked up every piece of dust or fuzz that he could find in an effort to destroy their habitat.

The doorbell at the office was another thing that he did to make his consultancy more "exclusive." If people had to ring a bell to get in, they would feel like they were going somewhere special. Sharon reminded him profusely that this would cost him business and he had replied, that he planned on operating on the assumption that he'd eventually have more than enough business anyway. Since he was not dependent on that income at this point, he'd operate on this basis right from the start, just to be consistent.

He'd also only feel compelled to keep his employees around if they did an exceptional job for him. He felt no more responsibility to give them anything more, since he despised the socialist party line and believed that employees should get out of a company exactly what they put into it - pure capitalism. "Workers should not be entitled to get anything else out of their jobs, since everyone can put enough in to be whatever they want, if they really want to."

Of course Sharon was not an employee, but she was the only one that he presently dealt with or knew personally, who was trying to do an excellent job for him in any way. She made her contribution as his lifetime mate.

"I'm not overwhelmed with anything bad, if I'm overwhelmed, it must be with joy", Phil replied to Sharon's accusation that he was screwed up and "needed to get a grip."

She was one of the ones that had been the hardest on him and unfortunately he had returned the favor.

Joey had said that some of his playmates were "stealing" his good new idea about putting his feet under the bleachers when he did his situps. Good ideas are meant to "be shared", Phil told Joey. "That is unless you can get paid for sharing them."

Vaughn knelt down and prayed, "Dear abba father, give me strength and guidance. I pray that I am following you and I pray that you will come into my life more and more and be my master. I pray that with your help I can do my duty to your father, the God of the universe."

Wars will start to end when men and now women stop taking money for dropping bombs on other people for any reason other than the defense of their sovereign land. The old slogan, "what if someone gave a war and no one came", is true. Let the generals and politicians stand there and shoot each other, we'd be better off without them anyway.

Sharon walked into the office and looked at Phil, she was curious about what he had been doing so far this morning. Phil anticipated her question, "I've been making toast", he said.

She was not a novice at this game, "and you're the toast", she said as she spun on her heels to leave and slammed the door.

"A man should spend a lot of his time on his knees praying, it keeps him in tune and touch with God and it's darn good for the muscles and joints of the legs and back to get that up and down stretching", said Vaughn. "It helps recharge your batteries too", Vaughn said. He twitched his neck a little and felt a tingle in his neck as a low voltage electrical charge moved up a nerve.

"What do we run on then, 9 volt, 12 volt or C batteries?", Phil asked sarcastically. "None, we run on G volt, God provides the juice", said Vaughn. "Like the song says, if you want to kiss the sky, you'd better learn how to kneel...because he works in mysterious ways."

Phil realized that he didn't even know how to spell kneel, much less do it for praying. It was time that he changed his ways and start kneeling and praying much, much more. In the last two or three days, he certainly had been reminded of it's importance lots of times.

Thinking back to his last conversation with a Pastor, Phil no longer thought that Jesus is probably the only way to get to Heaven. He also thought that if recent accounts of near death experiences are true, maybe you get a chance to meet him at death and you may know him by some other name.

"I'm not saying that smoking should be legal", said Phil, "I'm just saying you shouldn't be sent to "bufo" city for using it, they shouldn't be able to send you there just because you don't conform to them and smoke tobacco and drink beer."

"I am what I am", thought Phil. He didn't care if he was perceived as a racist, chauvanist, hippie freak or anything else, he was going to do things according to the dictates of his conscience, not to the dictates of any man or woman.

In other words, he'd finally decided that a man just has to say, "STOP!, that's enough you all, shut up and listen to me for a change!

I am what I am, I'll do what I do and I did what I did and it's done. I did what I did for lot's of reasons, but in the future I'm going to do what I do because I want to! I'm not accountable to any of you, so mind your own business and leave me alone."

Not that it was necessarily related, but Phil also thought that when your time is up, your time is up. This in spite of the fact that he thought that you should completely trust in God for your wellbeing, but you should also take the most active part possible in seeing for you and your's wellbeing and safety. This because just as it's possible to commit suicide which is against God's will, it is also possible to "commit suicide" less consciously, like by smoking or leaving your doors unlocked when murderers are prowling around outside.

Phil was now shoveling up the bottles, burnt aluminum cans, old shoes and other charred garbage that had spilled when the 55 gallon drum fell over, that he used for burning trash. The renters over the last year had obviously been dumping all kinds of non combustibles into the can, against his desires. They paid his rent but caused him a few headaches too. "That must be the price I have to pay to own real-estate", he thought to himself.

He had found a very small box that fit perfectly into the bottom of the trash bag and it looked like it would make a perfect floor to the bag, so that nothing sharp would puncture it before the garbage men tossed it into their truck. This was no big deal, just another simple observation that the world and all of it's good things were connected and that one good turn or idea deserved a compliment. The frequently noticed perfect fit of these small things was proof for Phil that there was a God.

As Phil put the shovel back in the garage, he knocked a box of nails over. This action led to point two; that this beautiful world that God created for us is constantly under attack by entropy, which is also known as chaos, the devil the bad part of ying and yang and lots of other names.

NEW YEARS INDEPENDENCE RESOLUTION

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"Just admit it", Phil said to Sharon, "You and I are exact opposites in almost every way"!

She looked at him coldly, almost with hostility and didn't say anything she was good and mad already.

"You're the only one for me, I want to stay with you till I die!", he said as she went inside.

Phil went thought to himself, he had joined the counterculture and his wife Sharon had stayed with the "establishment" point of view. She would like for everyone to be straight and do what they're told to do all the time according to the "establishment's" standards. He didn't live that way, and now he had finally decided that this would be the year that he would do things his way, no more saying "I'm sorry", and apologizing for being who he was. He didn't embrace the whole counter culture by any means, but he didn't reject everything that he'd learned in the 70's and early 80's like she seemed to want him to.

Their very brief conversation ended and Phil went outside to play catch with Joey.

Joey's throws were real good, but his catching skills needed a lot more practice if he wanted to make it in the big leagues.

Joey was not pleased with the way he was playing. "I stink", he said with a self-disgusted look on his face.

"Don't feel sorry for yourself, ever", Phil told Joey in a kind voice. "You should thank God for everything he gave you and he gave you a lot." Joey was tall, strong, smart and handsome, that a lot more than most people are born with.

Then something occurred to Phil. He had not really been mulling it over in his mind, it more or less just came to him. Nothing profound, nothing really exciting, but it came to him and it made him stop in his tracks.

Whoosh!!! The hardball whizzed past his glove, which was by now limp at his side. "Dad", Joey shouted, "what are you doing?"

Phil snapped back to reality. "Sorry Buddy, I missed that one didn't I." "You sure did Dad, you just stood there like a Dummy!."

Being a typical seven year old, Joey emphasized the word Dummy.

"Joey let's quit playing for a while", Phil shouted across the yard. "You're doing great catching high pops, but you need to practice your grounders more."

Joey was disappointed, he was getting into playing catch for the first time. Those high pops were getting easy for him and it made the practice fun.

Phil left and Joey started throwing against the garage door instead, this way the ball would roll back to him like a grounder.

Inside the house, Phil rushed to the den and started typing at the word processor.

"I hereby declare my independence from the New World Order, from the Old World Order and from anyone else that wants to decide what's best for me." He pounded the words out quickly on the keyboard. "I am here and now forming the "Individuality Party", his fingers flowed over the keys with the skill of years of practice. Then to add a little edge to his statement he cynically added, "and for now on whatever I say goes!"

"Most of all this is a Declaration of Independence from the president and the United Nations New World Order. As an individual endowed with certain inalienable rights, I serve notice that your New Order and your Old Order has no jurisdiction over me as long as I'm alive."

Just then, Joey walked into the office, the smell of smoke was still just barely present and his "Hardy Boy" son was about to bust him.

"Dad, you've been smoking something haven't you", his tone didn't contain the shock and amazement that it had the first time he had busted his dad. "Maybe your right, maybe your wrong", Phil told Joey in response to his son's several questions about had he been smoking. "But in either case, you'd be very smart to never even try the stuff", Phil felt a little hypocritical but went on, "it makes you lazy, it's bad for your health and it could separate you from God."

Phil wanted to share his latest short story with Sharon and he wondered if he should show it to her now. Upon reconsideration, he decided to wait a while and let them get in the new house first. He thought she might be mad enough to divorce him and since he thought that she and the kids would be better off in the new house, he'd try and wait till they moved in and got settled. But of course if she preferred to stay in their present house that was fine too.

In a minute, Phil left that room and surprisingly Joey left without any more questions. He hadn't forgotten what he smelled but he still didn't know what was going on with the smell in his dad's office. In a couple or few years, he would know all about it and form his own opinions about his dad and his preferences. Phil didn't go for the establishment's line that he had an 'addiction', he saw it as more of a preference. He preferred smoking to drinking and he wasn't going to ever accept their propaganda on the subject.

**"Mama Mia, Papa Pia", Phil said jokingly as they got ready to go to the party. Joey was now brushing his teeth and he stopped long enough to complete the rhyme. "Baby's got the diareha", the seven and a half year old chimed in. "Oh no!", said Phil, "I didn't know you knew that one."
"Sure dad, I know them all", said little Joey.**

"I don't know why she puts up with that dog", Phil said, looking at the scene on their living room floor. Their two dogs Snoopy a Boston Terrier and Sparky a big white Shepard/Malamute, were licking each

other's faces, making it appear that they were kissing and loving each other. "They're probably getting some leftover food off each others faces", Sharon said smiling. It had to be for a practical reason, even though the two dogs did seem to love each other.

"You need to watch what you say around him", Sharon scolded. "He listens to everything you say."

"I know", Phil replied a little irritated, "so I'm not perfect, are you?"

Phil already was getting the feeling that this night was going to end up with the big, "I'm going to live my own life with you or with our you", statement.

The tension that usually developed before a party night was already creeping up on them. It left an air of uneasiness they would have to cut through if they wanted to have an enjoyable night out. Meanwhile the two parents continued to get the children ready for the babysitter. Joey was old enough now that he occasionally liked to watch sports on TV and tonight while his parents were out, he might catch a few minutes of the Colts football team.

"Dad, who do you want to win the game tonight", Joey said as he watched Phil put on his Colts hat. "I want the good guys to win", Phil answered. He really had no great affiliation for the team yet, the family had only been in the city for one year now and the Colts were not winning many games.

"Who are the good guys dad?", Joey asked sounding slightly confused. "They're the ones that comb their hair and brush their teeth and clean behind their ears!", Phil laughed, "now get ready for bed!"

"Dad, can I be a writer too when I grow up", Joey wondered out loud. "Sure", said Phil, "just go out and have some adventures so you'll have something to write about and be sure you live through them. Then even if you don't end up writing about them, you'll at least have stories to remember." When he looked back on any 'adventures' that he may have had, Phil thought most of them looked more like disasters. Joey had been asking Phil to read some of his journal notes out loud and the child had gotten a kick out of the concocted stories - that is the ones that Phil didn't censor to the boy.

Most of all Phil wanted to share what he was writing about with his wife Sharon, but it never had happened.

He just didn't want Sharon to read his script and take it too personally. He had told her that she was "more or less" one of the two main characters in the story so she would probably think that every little verbal jibe was aimed at her. She would probably see them as verbal bullets and would feel hurt, this is not what Phil intended and he hoped that she would not take it that way.

At 8:30 Phil and Sharon arrived at Jack and Melissa's house for the New Years Eve party, there kids were with the babysitter. The party almost never came off, due to an argument between the guys and the gals over the type of refreshments to be consumed. Phil and Jack preferred the stronger varieties and the girls wanted less emphasis on getting wasted. "Don't bring anything illegal in this house or I'll call my dad in a skinny minute and have him pick me and the kids up!"

The gals didn't want Phil, Jack and anyone else to get too crazy, especially since Melissa's kids would be there, although they would be asleep. Phil and Sharon had a running argument about smoking and it seemed to him that she was herself as intoxicating as any drug he had ever tried. Phil had gotten a chuckle out of Jack when he compared women to a drug "yeah, they're the ultimate aphrodisiac", Jack had replied in agreement.

"They're more than just an aphrodisiac drug", Phil continued, they're the alpha and the omega of drugs and they don't want any competition from anything else that can go to your head."

Sharon and Melissa preferred going to parties with the people they knew from church - punch and cake and games type of parties.

"Why do you have to get wasted?", Sharon had asked him earlier in the day as they shopped for queso and chips.

"How are you going to survive at the church party next week", she asked him sarcastically, "you'll have to be sober all evening."

"I don't mind being sober at their party", Phil shot back, "but it is nice to be around 'real people' too and like you're so fond of saying they don't act very natural unless they've had a few drinks." "Well, I am just trying to do the same thing and I'm not apologizing to you for being that way."

A drunk man at a party isn't much different than a preacher on a roll thought Phil. They both are like broken records; both only talk, neither listens and they both think they know it all. He was reminded of what the old baseball manager being interviewed on TV the other day had said - he, "couldn't stand a drunk man when he was sober or a sober man when he was drunk!"

"I'm not getting wasted", he answered irritably, "but if you're going to put conditions on what I can and can't do, then I'll just stay home." It was a common argument between them. "I don't mind if your churchfriends come too", Phil went on, "I'll party with anyone as long as they don't turn me in." "Heck maybe they'll actually 'come to'", he chuckled to himself at the little pun.

Jack's brother Bill and his fiancée, Rhonda, were coming too and that was part of the problem, since they were hard core partiers and proud of it.

Bill and Rhonda arrived at 10:00, along with another friend.

Rhonda was quick off the marks, "I'm singing bass tonight" she informed the roomfull of people, "I've got laryngitis."

This was said in reference to her winter cold, which a lot of the group had also had recently.

It would turn out that she talked a blue streak regardless of her laryngitis and fancied herself as chic, despite her plain looks. "She must think big boobs go a long, long way", thought Phil.

The chick who played Vicky Dale in the Batman video was pretty damn hot thought Phil. He could watch her all day, Even with that attempt at an scared ugly look she had on her face when the joker pointed the gun at her.

Sharon hadn't noticed him watching the vide so intently, but she sure noticed him get up in a hurry to go out and burn one. "I wouldn't have gone outside so abruptly, except that at the rate that Rhonda was talking, I would have missed it all if I waited for her to come to a stopping point."

Phil had resorted to going to Jack's bathroom to write in peace. Between Sharon's looks and the probability of making everyone else think he was a kook, he decided it was better to find a private place for a couple minutes to jot down his thoughts before he forgot them. "Too much aggravation", he thought, "I can't do anything in peace."

Rhonda's advice on raising children sounded hollow to Phil. She was an ice skating instructor and trained kids for competition. Her clients were the children of Chicago's rich people. "I don't need children", she had said. "I already have seventeen of them", she went on. "They listen to me like I'm a general and they'll worship me when I'm ninety, why should I have my own?"

She was profuse with her opinions on raising the, "dear little devils", but Phil wouldn't pay an ounce of salt for advice compared to Melissa's or Sharon's, who between them were raising six kids.

There was a loud knock on the bathroom door, "hey what are you doing in there!", shouted Rhonda, "writing a book or something!."

"Damn it", muttered Phil to himself. "Sharon must be telling everyone what I'm doing." Telling people that he was trying to be a writer was something she did that Phil didn't like.

He reacted angrily, "I'll be out in a minute, so get lost!"

Phil generally was less polite to women who were not super pretty. A chauvanist to the core Sharon called him. Phil wrote feverishly to get the last lines down on the napkin so that he could leave the bathroom in a reasonable amount of time and save face when he rejoined the others. Meanwhile he was getting hung up on words. Phil didn't like a lot of adjectives in his writing, he thought that good writing shouldn't require a lot of adjectives, let the reader use his imagination a bit. Phil wanted to achieve the kind of sparse hard hitting, descriptive language that he heard in the oral story telling of country folks. In his opinion they had the best expressions, not real wordy, but really on the mark. Unfortunately his writing style still had a long way to go.

Soon the gang was going outside to burn another one, since Melissa had made the house off-limits for smoking. Phil decided to pass on a buzz this time. It would be a good test of his will and would score a point or two with Sharon although that wasn't important at this point. "I probably should limit myself to smoking once a month at the most, instead of every two weeks", he thought to himself. Phil didn't want to announce his intentions to Sharon, since it would probably be self-incriminating, he would rather plead the fifth, because now he'd decided to do it whenever he wanted to.

At his lowest point years ago, he had averaged about 5 times a day, so in his opinion he'd come a long way, but Sharon still was far from satisfied.

"New Years resolution?", said Phil. "Yeah, I'm renewing the one I made last year and this time I hope to make it work!."

"I don't remember what your resolution was last year", Sharon said puzzled. "It was to be as real man for a change, and not let anyone run my life or censor me", he said proudly. "Oh God, give us all a break", Sharon groaned.

The party broke up at about 1:00 and Phil and Sharon went home. They spoke as the car maneuvered the wet streets.

"Melissa thinks Rhonda knows what she's talking about", said Sharon. "I'm surprised to hear that", Phil replied.

"Yeah, Rhonda's smart and and she even called herself aggressive" Sharon went on, "I like that in a lady, although personally, I prefer to just be assertive of my rights."

"Assertive, aggressive, what's the difference", said Phil.

"Either way, you all have the right to ruin a guys life with just one phone call to your lawyer."

"Don't start that", Sharon said. "I can't help it if your a wimp." She always chastised him when he started 'bitching and feeling sorry for himself'. It was New Years Eve and soon the champagne would be flowing.

"Well anyway", said Phil, "I wouldn't go along with any of what Rhonda had to say" back there. "Thats funny", Sharon teased, "you were nodding your head everytime she opened her mouth."

"Just humoring her", Phil replied.

"Look", said Sharon, "you know I hate the way you act when you smoke, I don't understand why you do it when you know how much I hate it. I wouldn't do anything like that if it bothered you so much!"

Phil considered for a few seconds and then spoke, "honey, why don't you tell me why you hate the way I act when I smoke and maybe I can change the way I act. That's going to work better than trying to get me to stop."

"you can get lung cancer and heart disease from smoking", Sharon reminded him. "Yeah, but I'm probably gonna get one of those anyway", he answered. With the way humans abused their bodies and the environment, he knew that something out there that humans had put into the environment - or his own excesses, would obviously do him in.

They had gotten into a full blown fight by the time the car pulled into their driveway. The smoking disagreement had a way of escalating like this.

"I don't know if this is going to be a divorce or our last real estate deal we pull off together", Phil told Sharon, when the conversation reached the point of divorce being mentioned again.

"Let's hope it's a profitable one", Sharon replied.

If they got divorced right now, Phil and Sharon were going to have to sell the still unfinished house that they were building. No one knew how this was going to proceed or what it's outcome would be. Their marriage was on the rocks again and the final outcome was uncertain.

He figured he'd just do the best he could if they actually split, but it didn't look real good. If they got into a court battle over there few possessions, things could get messy.

The trauma that a divorce would cause the children was Phil's greatest concern. Sharon had the exact same concern.

"The fruit of the tree of Knowledge, that must be pot or shrooms or something", Phil was thinking to himself, "darn, I hope that's not right", he said to himself.

For now on he would just tell Sharon, that he would absolutely have to have the right to make all of his own decisions. At least between the two of them, the government's laws were a different thing. He would

try his hardest to obey all of the governments laws, however he knew that there were a couple he presently couldn't force himself to obey and didn't feel compelled to either.. These were moral laws, such as right to choose abortion and secondly the right to smoke what ever he wanted to.

Sharon had flipped out over him wanting to go smoke with his friends at the New Years Eve party. This was the cause of the fight, but it had greater ramifications. Phil wasn't sure, but he felt that their own little Atomic clock was ticking about as close to midnight as it ever had in the history of their little cold war" - all of their friends knew about Phil and Sharon's little war over him smoking and her emotional objections to it. For his part, Phil wanted to do as little of it as possible, but he was to be the judge of how much or how little of it he could do. He didn't want his wife telling how often he could smoke and he wasn't sure that he agreed that the government had a right to tell him that he couldn't do it at all.

It seemed like they were never going to come to terms with each other over this, they were miles apart in their beliefs about it and this might be the straw that would break the camels back in their already strained marriage. There was still however 'hope' and at least temporarily a happy ending.

Now it was Phil's turn to get tough, he turned slowly around towards Sharon and spoke.

"For now on I'm just going to do my best at home and at work and I'm going to be the judge of it what I'm doing is moral or ethical or anything else", his voice was not loud but his tone was terse. "For now I'll do exactly what I want to do and I won't say I'm sorry or appologize to anyone", he was talking in a tone of voice she wasn't used to - he was plain yelling at her. He wouldn't make this speech to his employees, but everything he said would apply to his relations with them to. He was going to be a tougher boss, but hopefully a better boss in lots of other ways too.

Saying all this to Sharon was a big relief to Phil and now he could see major benefits as he relaxed a little. The major benefit to him was that he didn't ever have to feel in a hurry or under pressure again. He would leave everything in God's hands now and just relax.

"You and I can live life together or apart, that's up to you at this point and it probably always will be, I don't plan on ever divorcing you over anything", she like this part, but not the next.

He felt like he was coming out of the closet of shame that society had tricked him into because he smoked grass.

Phil didn't expect Sharon to smoke with him, but he did expect her to stop getting on his case about it all the time.

"I absolutely won't be ruled by you or any other person or by any government on earth", Phil told Sharon, "for now on it's up to me how I live my life, God help me."

In a nutshell, he was now ready and willing to meet his maker.

"God help us all", said Sharon, "now we're really in for it."

He had stopped smoking almost completely seven years ago and he was trying to think about the changes in his life since then. He had since had one child, the other being born back in his wilder, freer days. He was certainly wealthier now than he had been back then, but he wasn't sure that he was any healthier. In fact he was now sixty pounds heavier than the spry 165 pounds he'd been back then!

Phil loved her and always would, he'd always protect her too. He wasn't planning on getting mean with her, he was planning however on getting tough with her. If she wanted to keep sharing her life with him and him sharing his life with her, she would have to at least cool her jets. That way he could continue to be honest with her and not hide the things he was doing from her. His life was about to change and he hoped that she would come along for the ride.

"As far as I'm concerned, our wedding vows are stronger than any U.S. law, because I made that vow to you before God. I promised to be faithful and promised a few other things regarding our marriage. Those are the only promises that I plan on working like heck to keep."

She was an excellent wife except for the one point of contention regarding smoking. Sharon also could work and being an accountant she could make good money in case they ever needed it, this would be useful to the family with or without him. If Phil changed jobs to the travel agency business, she might truly have to go back to work in the near future.

"From now on, this is how it's going to be", he told her with authority. "As long as are married and living together, you won't question how I live my life. I'll do whatever I want and my only obligation is to do it responsibly and I mean responsibly in my opinion.", Sharon was stunned but relieved too.

"I will do whatever I want from now on, cause I know I can live without you now. Over this one little point of disagreement, you've made me sorry that we ever got married. If I can't be the boss between me and my wife, how can I ever be the master in other situations. As long as I don't recklessly kill someone or commit adultery, you'd better leave my conscience alone and worry about yourself or someone else"

"I'm going to try to be as considerate as possible of your and your feeling on the matter, but as far as when and where and everything else, it's purely up to me"

"I was a certain kind of person when we met", Said Phil, "I've tried being something else for eight years now and I don't like it so I'm going back to who I was - maybe I'll go seven years on seven years off for now on", he smirked.

He hated to think that they might split, but he was convinced that it was worth taking a stand now. If it came down to it and she threatened to divorce him, then sadly that is what was going to happen. He would not play second fiddle in their relationship anymore.

Getting divorced was one of the last things he wanted to do, but before it had been the last thing.

"I don't need a babysitter and for now on I won't let you mother me or whatever it is you're doing!"

"I'm not making any concessions either", he said indignantly, "that's just a way of getting the camels nose under the tent and then your demands will never end."

"It'll be a miracle if we save our marriage", Phil told Sharon. "I'm putting my foot down about what I want and for your part, you're as stubborn as can be", but I'm hoping for that miracle to happen.

"And one more thing, one more very important thing, don't expect me to make any more promises to you about anything.

Like I said, the only promises I've got to keep to you are the ones we made when we got married.

"Don't ask me to make you any promises and you won't have to worry about me telling you any lies."

"I'm not buying into your way of thinking and that's, that!

You'll either have to be with me or against me, because that's what I must have from you for now on", he told Sharon.

This was the statements and especially the tone, that she had needed to hear and had actually been wanting to hear. Now they could get down to being a loving couple and living a more peaceful life together or finally end the whole thing - the next move was Sharon's.

Phil felt like he had been born again and was now as free as the f---- breeze. He took another one and this one he inhaled into the left side of his throat, lungs, sinuses and head. Ten minutes later he did a second one and it was directed down the right side of the throat to stimulate that side of the body a little more.

He thought momentarily about Sharons concerns regarding their relationship and realized that they were very real and quite logical for her to have. Phil, however still believed unequivocally that he was the one that had to be in the drivers seat. He was a critic, a writer and as the button on the mans shirt said, "sent here to be an observer." She would have to stick by him or else they'd split.

"Fuck it is what you say first when they preach their morals to you, and then you say fuck you!", Phil exclaimed. He would gladly and humbly bow his knee to the King of Kings, but not to the powers that be on earth. They were in his opinion bogus and he would have to have his arm twisted to bow down to them and their sense of right and wrong.

When you start robbing people with guns, you'd better be prepared to eventually get shot and deserve it.

The left eye tooth forward like Popeye was what currently worked best for Phils breathing. It didn't seem like a very natural position for his jaw, but it seemed to work in moving the jaw and facial bones into the optimum position for Phil. He figured that after a few dozen years of holding his jaw like the little "I am what I am" man, it might actually wear his teeth down to where it did feel right. This would be a slow correction of the weak jawed look that he had adapted out of fear of the world when he was a child. The same fear that in todays super stressed out world leads to TMJ in millions of people.

Part of his new attitude was to try to be as fearless as Popeye. He looked in the mirror and to his surprise the popeye look also lined up his teeth correctly, although he had to look closely past his crooked teeth. They were like the excess baggage of life that we have to look past in order to see the truth.

Phil felt like he had become a conscienceless money making machine, he would rather spend his time contemplating things instead of working like a monkey on a chain. He'd gladly spend a couple years contemplating how loud you have to yell in a dead man's ear to wake him up and other such issues.

"It's my way or the f---ing highway", Jack responded to Melissa. He truly believed that her hormones or something else, had an overwhelming influence on her making her "certifiable."

Jack thought that his wife occassionally needed to be talked to like one of the kids. She was simply too nuts to reason with and he would from time to time tell her the bottom line in now uncertain terms.

Just as a wife affects her husband, so does a child affect the parents and vice versa.

"We've heard enough of your gloom and doom talk", Phil told the preacher. "We don't need mullahs or preachers telling us how to live or we'll spend eternity in hell."

"For now on it'll be live for today and have a good time! You see, I'm glad that the end of the world is coming, because I think the change will do it good!"

"Great", said the preacher, "when your kids ask you what you do for a living, you can tell them you make toast and you're the toast!"

He looked at Phil with disdain, disgust and a few other emotions and spit on the ground, "that's the kind of old man you are to those kids, you're a joker and a loser."

His voice trailed off and Phil felt his bloodpressure rise. "Chill out", he heard the voice in his head tell him. It was his conscience talking to him.

"Life's a drag sometimes", Phil countered, "the whole world could use a joint, cause it's too damn uptight."

If the whole world had a peaceful attitude adjustment, things might improve", he said. His humble opinion was that the stuff was made by God, not by the devil and God made it as one of the first and best stress relievers.

As far as his wanting for him and Joey to learn karate, he thought that it was none of the preachers opinion. "As long as their are Neandrathal's out there, I'll learn it, you're welcome not to."

Phil made another stupid insensitive remark to Sharon on the Phone and then hung up, oh it felt good to be one of the ugly, repressive, subhuman dominant white males, he thought sarcastically.

"This is only the beginning", Phil told Sharon and Joey. Sally heard too, but at three years old, she was too young to understand the idea he was trying to convey. Sharon and Joey also didn't understand exactly, they both interpreted the sentance differently.

"It's easy to make lots of money", Vaughn told Phil, "it's just how you do it that is important". Phil looked at his friend and remarked sharply, "you scoundrel, you'll take it anyway you can get it". "Thanks, but I really deserve that", Vaughn replied sarcastically.

Their conversation continued, each man trying to make a case for himself to justify his lifestyle. "I like to be alone", Phil said.

Vaughn, ever the social climber knew this and had razed Phil about it before. "Why would you want to be alone."

"Guess it's because I cut myself more slack than anyone else does."

He often felt like a puppet on a string, orchestrated by family, friends, co-workers or complete strangers. It seemed to him, that every stubbed toe and cut finger had someone elses name on it. They came courtesy of someone who was pressuring him to rush through some task, in order to make their life easier or their control over him more complete.

This was not only the beginning of a new way of doing things for him, it was also the end of the old ways. He had somehow turned out that, but he would quickly change, he would not "hop to it" anymore. He

had allowed himself to be bullied by too many people. They had told him what to do and he had jumped to it and then also had to give an accounting of everything he did.

"Downloading humans", the funny part occurred when the technology was still in its infancy. Wealthy individuals put in rush orders and speed up the growth of their clones with vitamins and "fertilizers." This way they could benefit from the procedure before it was too late for them. Prior to their downloading into their new clone, they spent years on heart lung machines. Of course by this time, heart lung machines were highly advanced and quite portable. This prolonged their lives until their clones were mature enough for receiving their brains contents.

This was sometimes done to newborn babies and even fetuses on occasions when it was an emergency. When possible, the clone would be slowly matured until it was about 21 before the old individual's brain was downloaded. Just like VCT tapes Phil thought to himself as he heard this revealed to him. It made for rather unusual children, when they had the body of a two year old and the mind of a ninety or hundred year old.

Probably the most bizarre aspect of it was when the older individual was dead before downloading. When this occurred, if any brain tissue could be kept on ice, it was still injected just for continuity. If live brain tissue was unavailable, then any surviving part would be used. If no tissue was available, then "floppy disk" copies of the individual's brain contents would be kept on file. These constantly updated files achieved virtually the same effect on the clone, only the latest memories would be absent.

"Then divorce me", Phil told Sharon coolly. Her Bible had all kinds of passages about submissiveness, which of course she just paid lip service to. The one or two possible references to divorce however gave her endless ammunition for her harping. The next to last thing that he wanted, was to get divorced. The last thing that he wanted was to be made miserable for the rest of his life.

Tucking in your shirt was a sign of submission in Phil's opinion. He noticed that like him, Joey didn't like to do it. Sharon on the other hand always the perfect citizen, required it of both of them. He was Donald, she was Daisy. Likewise, Joey was Micky and Sally was Minnie in this household that was like a cross between the TV show honeymooners, the Bundys, the Simpsons and the family in the video "McGee and Me."

He changed stations on the FM stereo radio, "I know `she's got legs'", he said in response to the title of the next song on the station that he had just left. He was looking for a station with something a little heavier to feed his head with, it wasn't available on any of the stations he tried, so he went back to the legs song.

Jack sometimes razzed Phil about how he made his money. "You must feel terrible selling the Japanese market information", he said, "especially in light of how they're ruining our economy."

Phil was used to it by now, he had gotten into it somewhat by accident, with the early arrival of his first child. "Yeah, I'd still be doing something respectable like my old bartending job, if I hadn't gotten caught up in this bullshit." His voice had a rare sense of irony to it. Besides, he didn't think the

Japanese were as much our problem as we were, he wouldn't be surprised if they got blamed for the Michelangelo computer virus before it was all over. He pushed a few more buttons and saved his computer file, just in case.

There were a lot of things that Phil wanted to teach the kids before it was too late. Mind your own business as much as possible and keep your nose clean, were two important ones. Drive right smack in the middle of your lane was another thing he'd tried to teach the kids. Always wear a seatbelt, keep your headrest up and use all of life's safety equipment diligently. Look both ways twice especially immediately before you enter the crash zone of the street or whatever. Make sure that you do it while you're still enough distance from that fatal zone to still stop or change direction.

The two men left the office and both loaded into Phil's car for the trip to the hamburger joint. Phil liked Jack and vice-versa, both saw the other as on the ball. For his part, Phil was so used to dealing with morons all day long, that he took such people for granted by now. It seemed that those that weren't morons, were often busybodies or mini-tyrants in one way or another. It was a rare individual who was both a nice guy and one the ball and he appreciated this in a few of his friends.

Their lunch confirmed this. At the fast food place, he didn't get his mayonaise as usual. Were these employees under strict instructions not to give drive-thru customers condiments or were they just all stupid. As they drove back to the office, Phil glanced at the other drivers that he passed. The number of completely frazzled women that he passed every day amazed him. They tapped their hands nervously as they waited in the drive-thru line, they drove at least as nutty as most men and the scowls on their faces could sink a ship. If men went around with such looks on their faces, they'd be taken away in straight jackets. Had it always been this way, or were women just more stressed out in these "later" days.

A rock and roll "hymn #43" was on the car radio and it was right on. "If Jesus saves, he'd better save himself", it went on to say something like from the glory money seekers that would use his name in vain.

One treat he remembered receiving occasionally as a kid, were cigar boxes. These big colorful secure boxes were great and Phil and his siblings had vied with each other to get one when the friendly lawyer brought them over.

As far as teaching them much more, he felt it was not his duty. His duty instead was to help get them started and let them learn how to learn the things they'd need to know. He couldn't and shouldn't impart too much to them, since this robs them of the chance to face challenges themselves and learn things their own way.

Phil kept the FM doorbell chimer in his chest pocket all the time when he was at the office. It alerted him of a guest at the door regardless of where he was in the building or grounds and it gave his heart a jumpstart when it's loud chime went off.

Phil's mind was wandering as he shampooed the office carpet. "Men have probably always smoked", he thought. He pictured Native Americans sitting around the fire smoking their peace pipes, in the background he pictured Indian women sitting and talking to each other. In the same picture there might be white frontiersmen or calvary officers smoking with them. Smoking seemed to be as universal among men as talking was among women.

That made him start thinking about what Sharon had said about the only friends he had being smoking friends. It occurred to him that this was normal after all and didn't make him a freak and a loser as she

made it out to mean. He was no longer sorry that he didn't hang around with the guys that she was always trying to route him to for friends.

Phil thought that one thing that got to her was that recently he could do whatever he wanted to all day long, this because he now had employees doing the phone work for him. This opened up his day so that he had more free time.

Jack asked Phil if he had anymore. "No I don't", said Phil, "not unless you want to smoke tar."

Later at the house Phil and Sharon got into it again. The usual thing about him not having a grip on life and not being stable enough to insure her and the kids the steadily increasing standard of living. She at least wanted to have enough security to feel that she would not unduly loose what they already had.

For his part Phil would love to give her an increasingly better standard of living, but he was determined to do it his way. If he were to work his fingers to the bone, it would have to be at something he enjoyed and that meant not at consulting. If she had to go to work to help herself maintain that feeling of security, then so be it.

In the playground of his mind, Phil fancied Joey as the keeper of the hearth and himself as the keeper of the carpet runners. Little Sally hadn't set out on a career yet, but like Joey, she had the ability to do just about anything. One of the few things in life that was still important to Phil was to be as honest as possible with Joey and Sally. He wasn't going to change -this for Sharon or anyone. As usual Phil saw this as an issue between he and Sharon. He didn't want for their marriage to be a fight and he didn't want either of them to feel like a captive.

"I don't want to put my cards in another persons hand to play, they'll just use them to their advantage not mine, it's human nature", Phil said.

"Is that why you're in business for yourself?", Jack asked a little enviously.

"Heck yeah", Phil replied excitedly, "I want to be in control of my limited skills and intelligence, that's the only way they'll work their best for me and my family."

Although Phil did not feel much of a part of organized Christianity, he did unequivacably accept Christ as his personal savior. He no longer believed that he had earnestly prayed for Jesus to come into his heart and be his savior. Whether or not this made him saved or a Christian he still didn't know. Different pastors seemed to answer the question differently, some saying he was saved others saying he probably wasn't. In his heart he was at peace about it, however since he believed that he was on the side of God, not the side of evil as many of this second group of preachers said.

He basically felt great, he felt that he was now free and could now do as he pleased from morning till the end of the day. He had decided that he wasn't going to be a "good German" for any man or point of view on earth.

Phil felt like instead of making concessions, he had over the last eight years, just "given away the farm", to Sharon. Now in retrospect, he believed that there was never any reason for concessions, much less a complete surrender of his will to her.

He didn't want it to be "for want of the price of tea and a slice", that old folks die, but he also didn't want them running his life.

That's why the eskimos came to mind, since they left their old out on the ice flows to die when they became a burden. Well meddlers fit into the same catagory in his book and they'd better realize that just as we owe them certain things, they owe us the same.

The incident at the consumer electronics store came back to him.

As he had stood in the line, an old man was buying a police scanner. Some old people apparently spend a lot of time listening to the scanner to fight boredom or whatever. The salesman demonstrated the scanner to the old gentlemen and across the wavelengths came the voice of an old woman. She was calling 911 to report two teenagers under a bridge, which she must have believed to be "suspicious" activity. Great, the police are getting surveillance reports from the little old ladies in tennis shoes crowd.

This was it Phil decided, he had been planning this for days and he knew that this would be the best chance to kill Vaughn that he would have. Since Vaughn had come over while he was shampooing the carpet, Phil would have the ways and means to clean up any traces of blood.

Phil straightened the tip of the note stabber with his plier and prepared to commit the dirty deed. Vaughn walked into the room and continued with tirade against Phil, lambasting him for everything that he'd done in the last ten years.

Phil knew he had to act now, to rid himself of this friend gone bad. He knew that Vaughn knew everything that he'd done regarding the smuggling operation and could this information could put Phil in the slammer for the rest of his life.

"I'm going to get a cup of coffee, do you want one", Phil said lightly, but treacherously to his old confidant. "No I don't want any damn coffee", Vaughn replied angrily.

As Phil left the room, he paused behind Vaughns chair considering if this was the time to do it. Then he continued into the middle office and filled his cup. He came back behind Vaughn and this time decided to do it!

With a loud yell, Phil grabbed poor Vaughn by the neck and thrust the note stabber into the stunned mans ear. Vaughn tried to yell, but Phil was ready for this and now cupped his hand firmly over his agonizing victims mouth. Phil drove the thin six inch spike deep into his old buddies brain and wallowed it around. For several seconds, Vaughn put up a struggle, but the struggle was to no avail and it soon became a spastic death dance. The big man collapsed to the floor and his body twitched wretchedly as the last ounces of strength he had were converted into involuntary contortions.

Phil wasted no time, the first thing he did was to bend the tip of the stabber back to it's original angle. The makers of these things no longer made them with the sharp point up and Phil wanted to remove it from consideration as an obvious murder weapon. He didn't know if the police would ever investigate him as a suspect, but just in case, he didn't want to forget anything. Now he came to the job of disposing of Vaughns body.

Despite all of Sharon's namecalling and the snide opinions of the men in high places and the ladies in tennis shoes, Phil was not going to back down. He felt like he was on the right path and that he wasn't going to tow the line per the instructions of any of the aforementioned. Even though they all evoked God and Jesus to help them do their will, Phil thought that the power this group received was from something other than God and good.

"Wipe that silly smirk off your face", the robed Judge yelled at him.

Phil's mind had drifted off for a couple of moments and the judge did not like that or Phil's looks for that matter. Phil was different looking and just being himself evoked looks from the gappers and rubber neckers crowd. The judge's comments took him back to sometime around first grade, back when his teachers had repeatedly said the same thing. To them he was the same strange boy that this judge saw but didn't understand or like.

Phil erupted, "look I'm just in favor of not getting screwed for smoking herb, I'm not speaking on behalf of crackheads and coke heads let them speak up for themselves if they want to!"

The judge interrupted him, "sit down you bum, why you don't even tuck in your shirt - you're a slob". The judge had hit on one of Phil's sore spots, he saw tucking in his shirt as a form of submission. Lately, he never tucked it in except at business meetings with the Japanese.

What it boiled down to between him and Sharon was her claim of moral superiority. She never would come out and say it, but she alluded to it frequently. Phil for his part thought it was bogus for her and her Christian buddies to feel morally superior to subhumans like him. Maybe they were "better off" than the crowd he hung out with, but not better.

"I'd like to give you some advice", the judge said to Phil. "Change the path you're on before it's too late!", his tone was very stern.

"Yes thank you and now I'd like to give you some advice", Phil to the judge. The robbed rogue looked at Phil disgustedly and started to speak, but Phil interrupted him.

"My advice to you is to take your advice and stick it where the sun don't shine!", even before Phil completed his sentence an uproar commenced. From the bailiff and others came cries of "contempt of court" and Phil was surrounded by Sheriff's deputies. He was trying to continue his speech and they proceeded to force him onto the floor. "I'll grant you one thing", Phil said as he struggled, "big brother's gotten damn good at keeping an eye on little guys like me!"

"Contemp of court, contempt of court", the judge shouted, "Take him away, take him away." The guards pounded Phil as they dragged him down the corridor towards the jail.

"It's time to even it up, to even it up, time for the ultimate liberation", Phil shouted as he was dragged away. "Men's liberation, womens liberation, everyone's liberation, you're free! free!" His voice faded into the stillness of the night.

The honest televangelists are true modern day heroes, but they're not the only ones spreading the word about the end of the age. So are rock singers like Jim Morrison who spread the word in songs like blood in the street in the streets of Chicago. The main difference is that they are also giving good advice about what to do to get ready for it.

"Women are not as open minded as men, or something, that's why they haven't till now provided humankind with any religious revelations." Vaughn had told Phil this on that same fateful day that his life had been snuffed. Now Phil would have to bear up under the guilty verdict that the mostly female jury had arrived at for him. He felt that if he'd had more men on the jury he might have been set free. "Those women should be working on quilting not on finding me guilty", he thought. He was remorseful now, but only because of the impending punishment, not because of the murder. He still tried to rationalize the whole thing so that he came out the victim and not Vaughn.

The problem with Christianity, (not Christ) is that it historically has tried to destroy any religion or philosophy that it saw as being in competition with it. This would be fine if they succeed in replacing the competition honestly through the truth, but they have instead done it via witch hunts and the sword. More than most other religions they have assumed that they are the exclusive and only way and that anyone that does not go along with them is therefore against them and expendable.

"Bite your lip", the judge told Phil. "Bite your own" retorted
"How old do you want the kids to be when they find out", Sharon asked. "I hope that they're old enough to understand, but that's largely beyond my control". He still thought that being honest with them was the best thing to do. Sharon contrary to her nature wanted him to deny it as long as possible, but he didn't see the necessity. He wanted to be truthful to his children as much as he possibly could be and in his mind he thought that this was no exception. He hoped that Joey would figure it out on his own and then just guess out loud one day. If that happened, Phil would just say well you guessed it.

Phil's "criminal" mind whirled around, always probing for a new opportunity a new opening to exploit the world around him. Now he sat at the desk and tried to figure out where a good place to hide the bong would be. Finally after trying to move the computer to a higher shelf on the hutch and failing, he found the perfect hiding place. It was just on the side of the monitor in an ideal spot. Here it would be hidden from all but the most curious eyes.

"She thinks I'm Satan", Phil said about Sharon.

"I'm sorry the office is a mess", Phil told the little old lady. She had come in off the street to look at cruise literature and Phil was caught with his office a tad messier than usual.

"Oh, what a nice office", the kind, grandmotherly looking woman replied, "it's not messy at all."

"It's not messy at all", Phil mocked her. By now he was completely deranged and didn't care what he said to anyone.

His office was his digs, he liked to hang out there. It was the place where, what he said went, dig.

His employees thought that Phil was a scoundrel and that his consulting business was unethical if not immoral. Since they believed this, it was easy for them to rip him off and justify it to themselves. Just the same, he justified ripping off the Japanese, who in turn justified ripping off the Americans and around and around it all went.

Some people are extremely efficient in their work, some are not, so why was he being penalized for the shortcomings of those others Phil thought as he considered quitting his job. "It's like Michael Jordan having to put up with some misfit like me on the Chicago Bulls, it's not fair", thought Phil. "Different people had various physical, mental and character strengths and weaknesses", said the old man and for now you'll have to bear with these people".(per the outline, add this to the beginning of Diary of a Mad Smuggler).

Sharon was convinced that Phil was such a subhuman bastard, that even his children must be half devil. "I can save the kids, but not you", she accused him, "but you're too far gone, I'm turning your ass in!".

"I gave you my heart, but you wanted my soul", Phil replied cryptically. She believed she could save these children even though she thought them to be half devilish, because they shared Phil's "corrupt"

blood. Such was her attitude of self-righteousness, that she thought her own purity was enough to do the trick.

Things had gotten so bad at the office, that Phil was down to saving paperclips that came on letter in the mail. He had always thought it humorous when he had heard of people doing this and now here he was, one of them. It wasn't only paperclips, it was also odd screws, nails, old phone and electrical parts, but this was nothing new.

He thought the pastors should remember the scripture, "love your enemy", in dealing with the occultist and blasphemous rock and rollers. As for those two groups, he hoped they would chill out, re-evaluate things and see the light.

Both should consider that they may have more in common with each other than they think. In fact they are all brothers and should treat each other better in the future than they have in the past.

Phil was the first one Vaughn had ever known who smoked through his nose instead of through his mouth. It worked great with the one hitter, since he could put the thing right up to his nose and the opening wasn't too big. He had tried the same thing with the bong, but he couldn't draw on it nearly hard enough to get a hit. It wasn't as gross as it sounded, because the thing didn't even have to actually come into contact with his nose. It was kind of like taking a nose hit with a joint except this way you got a smaller hit. The advantage was that it seemed to save a little wear and tear on his throat and was a more economical way to smoke. Phil rarely used this method, but it came in handy especially when his throat was on the verge of getting sore.

Phil gave Joey a little speech about the responsibilities the boy would have, if he became a black belt in Karate. "It's a little like you're a relatively nice gentle dog like a golden retriever and you've been changed into a doberman or a pit bull. You've got to keep that new dog under control or it will be picked up by the animal control people and put to sleep. If you're a blackbelt, you've got to keep your hands and feet under control at all times. If you hurt someone, irresponsibly, you'll be put in the big house or worse."

"For three strange days", the singer talks about having no obligations, he couldn't put a smile upon his face, so he pulled up a chair and began drinking by himself.

Sometimes it takes all day to make toast", said Phil, "that's why I come home a little light headed, I've been working all day to see the wall move and finally gotten it just when it's time to come home".

"I didn't try to teach you anything and I don't care if you got anything out of the job", said Phil sarcastically, "I just wanted to exploit you as cheap labor!"

"If it's true that some people that have never heard the name of Jesus may go to Heaven, because of their inherent belief in God and because of their good lives, isn't it logical that a lot of people that act religious won't go to Heaven like they keep bragging they know they will", Phil questioned Vaughn.

"You're a disgrace to the human race!", Vaughn replied. He was a former great athlete and he could be intimidating, and this was one of those times. "You're just making a lot of noise as usual", he told Phil, "but you'll pay for it I guarantee it!"

"Yeah, I know", said Phil, "I'll get it one way or the other that's for sure".

"The testicles and ovaries are the essence of humankind, as much as his brain is and more than his heart is", said Vaughn.

"I want us to have a good relationship too", Phil said to Joey, "heck, I want us to have a great relationship, I just want how we relate to be decided by you and me, not by the scouts or the church or anyone else".

They had gotten into an argument over Phil losing his temper and swearing as he tried to collect the two children and get out the office door. It was harder than one would think, since Joey was busy making miniature love letters with the paper cutter and glue and Sally was busy with the Air Mail stamper.

Phil went on, "I agree that church and scouts are good, but we need to be in charge of our lives and our free time, not them."

NEXT MORNING

Phil dropped Joey off at school and drove to work. He made coffee and then called Jack, to see if his "stuff" was ready.

"No, it's not here yet", said Jack, "I think I'll have it this afternoon at the earliest." Their conversation was short, as both men had work to do.

Phil cleaned the cigarette with a large straightened out paper clip and saved the resin by scraping it into a plastic first class stamp container. He was getting quite a little ball of resin by now and figured that it was about a two or three day supply - if he needed it.

"Funny", he thought to himself, "I've heard of collecting balls of string, but never balls of this stuff."

Wandering into the middle office, he set the camcorder and VCR up so that he could download the 8mm camcorder tape onto the standard VHS tape. The first segment on the 8mm tape was the Christmas tape from three months ago. He wasn't sure if they had that one on VHS tape, so he decided to copy it just in case. He could imagine Sharon's response if they already had it on tape, "you're just wasting tape, we don't need that", she would say.

He had recently heard however that video tape only lasts for up to 15 years, unlike audio tape which can last 50 years or more. After hearing that, he decided that it wouldn't hurt to have more than one recording of some family tapes. Especially if he used better quality tape and a slower recording speed, like he was doing now. He wanted those tapes to be around in fifty years if possible and with the way VCR'S eat tapes and the way they fade away, the only way to preserve them was to have two good copies.

As far as Phil was concerned, Joey's new nickname should be bulldog.

Bull had been Joey's unofficial nickname since he was about three and now that they'd moved to a town that had a bulldog as its mascot, it would be appropriate to change his nickname to bulldog. He certainly was as tenacious as a bulldog and he seemed to have inherited his physique from his mom's side of the family, which meant he was as strong as a bull.

Joey was learning to be Phil's office boy and he gradually becoming familiar with all of the office machines. This included copiers, typewriters, computer, VCR and video tape player.

Phil was instructing Joey on how to operate the VCR and VTP in tandem to download tapes. "When you see those two arrows pointing to the left, that means you're rewinding, when you see the white square, it means stop, when you see the big arrow pointing to the right lit up, it means you're recording."

Joey was absorbing everything that Phil said, Sally was listening some too. "Those are called universal symbols", Phil tutored. "There are lots of universal symbols, stop signs, yield signs and most famous the cross." The problem was that symbols could be misread with catastrophic results.

For his part, Phil didn't want to be unduly influenced by the, "sky is falling", crowd, or by the "cut the end of the ham off, because mother did", crowd.

"You're wasted!", said Vaughn, "you've come to Bible study wasted!"

It was Phil's first meeting with the group, but so he had wanted to make a more favorable impression. Phil limped into the room favoring his right foot and plopped down on the couch. His foot had fallen asleep as we waited at the front door and he looked like a drunk as he staggered into the house.

The Old Man's hair was white as snow, which was appropriate since he was older than time itself. Other than the white hair, he showed no other signs of age, in fact he had selected white as his hair color anyway.

THis is how you make an "F", said Phil. Joey looked at the way Phil darkened the letters. "If you're being graded for penmanship, take your time and make the letters light first and then darken them with your pen or pencil."

"I know that already", Joey replied. It was one of his most frequent responses.

Phil got light, "what you do with this knowledge, is up to you, you can use it all the time or none of the time."

"Dad", you're crazy!", Joey laughingly replied.

The nature of the mistakes he made typing on the computer seemed different than those he make when writing long hand. Longhand errors were simply mishaped letters caused by his hurried writing, which sometimes happened in the car. With the computer on the other hand, his mistakes were caused by him hitting a wrong key. This created more Freudian slips. They came in different types, some only memorable in their own specific context. Sometimes errors were the use of upper case at the wrong time or letter substitutions that spelled unintended words that related to the content of the writing. Another thing he noticed on the computer, was that when tried to work "big" words for the first time, he messed up a lot. This happened when he tried to type the word frequent for the first time and it had come out "freuqent." Although not a Freudian slip error, it was common of the other major type of error he made. A Freudian slip was for example when he typed tough, when he meant to type touch and maybe when he typed next instead of neck. However, once he typed a "big" word a couple of times, it's typing "path", remained in memory indefinitely.

The memory patterns that he was establishing between his fingers and head for typing were improving, but he still stuttered with his fingers as much as he did with his lips.

The phone rang and it was Sharon, she was making one of her mid-day calls, to see what Phil had gotten done so far that day. She believed that he was wasted all the time at work and felt compelled to monitor on him periodically. He didn't really mind, it seemed to be another way to keep the lines of

communication open between them, per the marriage counselors advice. He didn't feel like he just came to work to make toast of himself, but that was her opinion.

Phil was never one to be interested in details. Even with amounts of money, he was only interested in gross amounts, not exact amounts.

Phil prayed that there would be a literal rapture of Christians, since that would probably save his wife and kids from having to suffer on earth during the prophesized horrible tribulation period. As for himself, he just prayed that he would qualify for the big airlift.

To Sharon's dismay, both Joey and Phil liked some of the same songs, including Ugly Boy Joe's, "I hate everything about you." Neither of them meant anything personal by their liking of the song, it was basically the beat and the rebelousness of the song. They were both rebels without a clue and they related to the song's message, which at least Phil interpreted as being, standing up against authority and the establishment.

"Elbow room room, give me some space to breath!", Joey said, whirling his elbows around like an NBA center who had just snatched a critical rebound. Joey had seen his dad do the same thing to him a few days ago and now he was perpetuating the outburst. Phil had not actually elbowed Joey or Sally who had also been there, but he did mean it when he told them to give him a a tiny bit of space.

As much as he loved the children, he was a little tired of practically tripping over them everytime he turned around. He did however love the personal contact and hugs they gave him, so he didn't want to discourage closeness. He just wanted them to realize that he had much longer arms than them and needed a little more "personal space."

Snoppy the dog on the other hand was a lot worse than the kids. He was always underfoot and Phil was trying to break the Boston Terrier of doing it. He basically gave the dog a little bit of his shoe in the behind to teach it. Phil observed that his dogs had to learn from experience and negative reinforcement at times, because they didn't speak English.

Their big yard dog, Sparky, was a good example of being smart enough to learn from experience. She was three years old now and knew a few things, including what "lookout!" means. Phil had taught her this by saying it before he threw things in her direction. Such was the case when he through firewood over the fence in her direction, when unloading the trunk. It hadn't taken her long to understand what lookout means and she would boogy out of harms way. Snoopy was only nine months old and he still didn't have the word's meaning deeply ingrained in his canine memory yet.

"We go around doing people favors in order to make them feel obligated to us", said Vaughn.

"Yeah and 90% of life is just showing up", replied Phil disjointedly.

"That might be true, but it's the other 10% that really counts", countered Vaughn.

"I'd also like to think that there's a "rest of the story" to what Jesus say's in the Bible and that it's not all the Dante's inferno business that the King James is all about".

"Dream on", Vaughn told Phil.

Phil blew up at the visa card lady on the other end of the phone. She had not returned his calls for two weeks and now she was telling him that they had rejected his application for a merchant number.

He told her that they were on the verge of landing a very large group cruise account and that her bank had now left him unable to service these clients. He really let her have it, kind of like he had heard his father dress down an employee one time, but not quite that bad.

"Boy, I'll bet that made her day", Phil thought to himself as he hung up the phone and chuckled.

"I just can't believe that God would send so many people to hell", said Phil, "it just seems too incredibly terrible."

Vaughn looked up from his plate of pie and remarked in an off-hand way, "God's not in a popularity contest, he's got the universe to run."

Phil walked over to the closet and opened the sliding door, as he did so, he heard a loud rippppp!... sound on the radio commercial. It was a the sound of a record player needle scratching all the way across a record. Immediately he forgot what he had walked to the closet for, as his mind focused itself on the radio's sound.

"That's it", he thought as he stood there temporarily blanking out on what he wanted from the closet, "that's the sound my brain disengaging." A second later, he remembered what he had needed from the closet and he picked up the IRS circular E booklet. "I wish my brain wasn't stuck in "park" so much." He was comparing his induced memory lapses with a car stuck in park or a computer with it's hard drive stuck in park.

Little did he know that this would be the same ironic moment that his computer would choose to permanently park it's hard drive and loose all of his valuable computer memory files forever. This wasn't one of the mini-crashes that it had in the past, this was the big one and all of his data was lost forever.(This could be the place where he decides to go 'BAD" , since all his letters and company data was lost forever, since he hadn't backed up his fickle hard drive.

"Where's Sharon going", asked Jack. "I don't know", Phil replied sarcastically, "I don't look a gift horse in the mouth." He was forever the scoundrel.

Jack left and the old man promptly appeared in Phil's mind. "I'm going to show you the only two stretches you'll ever need to do, to stay in good shape."

Phil was not in the mood to concentrate on listening, but he couldn't leave.

The old man got down on the floor and proceeded to reach out and touch his toes. He did it a lot easier than Phil ever could, since the old man's body was in much better shape than Phil's. He had the body of a mature, fit 30 year old. By contrast, Phil at the age of 40 had the body of a sixty year old. The old man's face on the other hand was hard to date. Using carbon dating it would go back eons, but based on the conditions of his features and the relative lack of features, he looked like a prematurely white haired forty year old.

The old man went on, "now rock back until your on your back, simple right?"

"Yeah, right", Phil said to himself.

"The second stretching exercise is to just do the opposite of that one!", he arched one of his high eyebrows to emphasize his point.

Phil shrugged, feeling like Nicotolas in McGee and Me after his cartoon character friend had given him some sage advice.

As far as your wife", the old man said, "just remember that men and women are both creatures of habit, but their habits are very different.

This was handy advice, since at that moment, Sharon burst into the office. "What's wrong with you!", she said, "have you lost your stupid mind!" She was referring to something he'd done wrong, which meant most any recent action on his part.

"Haven't lost my mind", he responded matter-of-factly, "just goin back to my wild roots". Phil slicked his "Wildrooted", hair back a couple of times with his comb and kept his feet up on the table.

The old man's hair was thick wavy and white, but Phil didn't know if he used anything on it.

Phil decided to leave the expensive smoke at home and not take it with him on his trip to New York and New Jersey. He knew that if he took it, he would smoke twice as much as he did at home, because he'd have the option of smoking in the evening as well as the day. It was also good to take a few days off from smoking once in a while and this was a good opportunity. Two fringe benefits that came to mind were, he would not be transporting the controlled substance and he would be giving his lungs a four day breather. Relating to his father and sister would also be easier, since he would be straight the whole time he was with them.

"The Pharasee's have a second chance", said the old man, "the question is will they come along this time or not?" This was one of those comments made by the old man that Phil did not understand. "People need to learn to believe in miracles", the old guy went on. "Just like cancer, it can be cured miraculously, but it's better to take better care of your body in the first place so that it won't be racked with so many kinds of cancer and potential cancer".

Every action we take has an equal reaction and we need to be careful in how we live, so that the reaction is not opposite or negative.

"If they'd stop being lawyers and credit police, they'd be much better off". Phil was listening and starting to get a little of the "gist" of what the old guy meant.

"It's not that I want to shortchange you by not re-hiring you for this next job", Phil tried to explain to the employee, "it's just if I spend money on your labor, I can't spend money on the things my family needs".

Phil was starting to call his stretching Yoga now, this despite protests from the right wing of the world.

Phil didn't want to be a yogi, he just wanted to be a pinball wizard.

Phil smothered the cigarette pipe with his finger, moving it continuously so it would not burn.

"Are you a smoker?", the employee asked.

"Yes" replied Phil matter-of-factly. He had hoped that the man wouldn't smell the smoke, since he had the airconditioner on and it filtered the air a little bit.

"What do you smoke, cigarettes or cigars?", his question was logical since he had walked into the room and knew he smelled something, but he wasn't sure what.

"I smoke cigarettes, cigars and pipes", Phil answered coolly, he had been expecting the question.

"What kind do you, smoke", the employee went on, "I only ask because it smells kind of different."

"I don't remember what this stuff is exactly, but I smoke a little of everything".

"What do you do with your spare time at work", Sharon asked him. She knew that now that PHil had employees, he must have a lot of spare time and she wanted to make sure he was using it productively.

Man does not live by bread alone, PHil said. He didn't bother explaining to Sharon what he meant, but she already had some idea.

He then layed down on the office floor and did some yoga. He assumed what he considered, a variation of the lion position. He liked this position for getting the kinks out of his body before a game of tennis. It was also good for relieving the pains in his sore neck and shoulder.

Sharon watched in disgust as he stuck his tongue out as far as he could. She thought he was being rude, but he was actually doing it for another reason. It turned out that like the old man had told him, this was a key yoga position and by sticking out his tongue as far as he could, it made it possible for him to flatten out more, achieve a better stretch and even pop his ears open.

mandalin wind, Rod Stewart

**The coldest nights I'd ever know, but the mandalin wind couldn't change yuo
the coldest winter in almost 14 years, I couldn't believe you kept a smile. Now I can rest assured knowing
that we've seen the worst and I know I love you. I never was good with romantic words so the next few
lines come really hard. I dont have much but what I have is your's, except of course my steel guitar.
Cause I know you don't play, but I'll teach you some day because I love you.**

**I recall the night we knelt and prayed, noticing your face was thin and pale, I found it hared to hide mey
tears, I felt ashamed, I felt i'd let you down. No mandalin wind coud change a thing, change a thing. No
NO.**

Nah, nah nah na, dah, dah ,da , dah.

**Coldest Winter in almost 14 yrs, you never , never changed your mind, yeah , oh, ho and I love you yes
indeed, I love you, whoo, whoo, and I love youi.**

Eric Clapton

Are you going to help , me or will you let me down, I'm lookinf gor that good live, will you let me down. Will we cryin passion or will we cry in pain. Will our lonely teardrops fill the world with rain.

Help me up don't you let me down, I'm going to wake up in lheaven , not the cold cold ground.

Cant you hear the lovers crying in the night, they spend their whole lives trying and still can't get it right.

I dont know where we're going, but I guess we'll start. And just to show that I mean it, baby here's my heart.

Help me up, don't let me down. I'm going to wake up in heaven, not the cold , cold ground.

Livin on my feelings.... baby once you touch it you'll never let it go.

So are you going to help me or will you let me down. I'm looking for the true love , am I lost or found. And will we cry in passion, or will we cry in pain and will our lonely teardrops fill the world with rain.

Help me up don't you let me down, I'm going to wake up in heaven , not the cold cold ground.

Help me up don't you let me down, I'm going to wake up in heaven , not the cold cold ground.

"He just doesn't have a conscience", said Sharon and then she supported her opinon with examples from their family life.

The ex employee who was testifying against him echoed her sentiments.

"He absolutely has no conscience, ethics or scruples", he said very seriously and he also backed up his opinion with a number of examples that had occured during his tenure at the company.

The judge was profoundly moved by the testimony that was before him. "You are indeed a traitor and a beast!", he yelled. "If it were up to me, I'd have you drawn and quartered, for the crimes that you've committed against your fellow citizens and your wife and children!"

Phil was scared, but tried not to show it, "the only crime I've committed is that I have followed my own conscience instead of you all's." They all looked at him like he was some kind of horrid monster as he continued, "all of you are just as two faced as I am, if not more so!"

"Your mind is for rent and so is mine", the judge said, "and you've rented it to the devil!"

Phil writhed in his seat at the insult, "I'd kill you for saying that except this is supposed to be a free country so you're entitled to your opinion and I'll respect it. It's too bad you won't respect my opinions about God or government or what I want to stuff in my pipe."

"You've hurt a lot of people by your actions" was the judges canned reply.

"That's bullshit", said Phil. "Contempt of court!", the judge yelled for the second time that day.

"Kraft!", shouted Joey, stepping on a pin.

"What does that mean?", asked Jack.

"Oh, that's just Joey's way of expressing his anger without cursing", Phil answered.

"No one will ever live forever on earth, not even with cloning and downloading, so why don't we start living with the knowledge that we're mere humans and stop taking life so seriously". Phil was sitting in a parking lot, to listen to the end of a song that he'd been wanting to hear all day. It was funny how the best songs came on just when he was ready to get out of the car, but he'd would foil entropy by staying in his car even if it made him a little late.

"The only everlasting life must be extra-human in nature."

His companions in the parking lots, were usually, elderly people left in cars and dogs and cats.

Phil closed the door to his office and turned on the vacuum cleaner, this would be a good way to get the door closed and locked so that he could smoke he said to himself.

"More than anything else, Heaven is a place where no one ever kills anyone else and no one ever has to tell a lie", the old man said to Phil. He had already described it as a place without locks and keys, since these were also un-necessary there. Other naturals such as no disease or misery were things that he didn't have to mention.

The old man now assumed the second yoga position that he used when doing his stretching excersises. Phil didn't think there was anything particularly spiritual about the yoga positions, but he also didn't believe Sharon's interpertation that by doing it, he was opening his mind up to demonic forces.

"Try it", the old guy said to Phil. Phil believed that the old man was not real, he considered it only a figment of his imagination that served as a character to write about. He figured that if Sharon knew about it, she would also see the old man as diabolically inspired and she would cite evidence from her cast of Christian leaders to support her belief.

Phil layed down on his back and stretched according to the old man's example. He stuck his feet up in the air, straightened his legs and held on firmly to each foot with his hands. It was quite different from just touching his toes and he found that it helped get his body limbered and unkinked, regardless which way the "pressure lies."

He couldn't do it with his legs completely straight yet, but he was getting more limber all the time and eventually might be able to.

For the time being he stretched as far as he could and pushed himself to go a little farther. He would hold onto the toes of his socks or other items of clothing in order to get a little stretch out of the material to help him stretch a little farther. He also used desks, tables, door frames and even carpets to help him stretch to the position he was trying for.

Phil was to the point where he would do the yoga about half the time when he got up in the morning. Usually it was at the office, but sometimes at home. He didn't miss it terribly if he didn't do it, but he definitely felt better if he started the day off by slowly getting the kinks out of his body.

"Dear God, I'm ready to die or go to jail and get it up the you know what for what I believe", Phil prayed, "and I don't even know if your sweet love is going to save me." For that matter, he didn't know if his own kids or family would be by his side.

"One more thing?", he said, "will you still love me if I demand blood for blood from someone that tries to hurt my family, I hope so."

He was thinking of the imaginery conversation that he had been having with himself. Phil had been working out scenarios about what he'd do if someone threatened his family. Although there may be very little that he could do about such threats, he just wanted whoever to know that he'd be after such people to the very max till the day he or they died.

Phil had a way of talking sometimes that was fairly unique. When in a conversation, he would sometimes say a codeword, such as the name of a song or something else. For example in a conversation he said **Rainy Day Women**, which would mean nothing to the uninitiated, but many would recognize it as the name of a Bob Dylan song. To Phil the song told a story, so in a debate or the like, he could just say **Rainy Day Women** and anyone familiar with the song would suddenly be faced with a whole litany of images and arguments.

"You could look at a map of the world and not be able to find the oceans", Phil slandered Sharon. She as usual was able to make a good comeback, "you could stand on the beach and not be able to find the ocean!"

She had wanted to know how much he was smoking and when was the last time he had bought any from Jack.

"You're not my auditor or my thought police!", he yelled at her. It was the same with Vaughn, he thought to himself as those words left his mouth. Vaughn sometimes asked him how much business he was doing with U.S. companies versus Japanese companies and he didn't like that either. He didn't want to tell Sharon that he thought that she might be right in hounding him to do it less, just as Vaughn might be correct for keeping after him.

"I accept, adore and submit to the God of Abraham and Issac and I humbly pray for Jesus to be my personal savior, but I don't despise or decry people of other faiths such as Moslem, Hindu, Budhist or others", he slowly pronounced the words to Vaughn. Later that year he came to the realization that this Christianity stuff was probably the most destructive force ever unleashed on man and all a big propagandistic lie.

"That's not good enough", said the Pastor. "To be a member of my church you have to accept that those people are damned unless they choose Jesus as their personal savior." Take a couple days and think about it and then come back and decide if you still want us to Baptise you.

Phil didn't need to take a day or two to think about it, after all he had been thinking about it all his life.

"I ask you to Baptise me as I am", said Phil, "if you don't want to, I'll ask someone else."

Phil hid things with some care and thought to it's effectiveness. He generally had a backup object to conceal the general location of the contraband as well as a second method of concealment. Behind the computer monitor, the pipe sat and the monitor was moved to provide the primary hiding place. Then a bottle of white out was used to plug the small hole between the monitor and the computer hutch. If not covered, the "hole" was still relatively easy prey for the curious.

Phil's mind wandered constantly, it was his brains way of looking for something more interesting to do.

The Bumblebee was a great bug, thought Phil, "it demands your respect ,because no matter how big you are, you have to freeze and assume a submissive posture when it's in your face.

God works in mysterious ways passed through Phil's mind a lot as he pondered everything from war and peace, economics and science, the birds and the bees and the words on a page.

The hard stuff, such as mushrooms were several steps above smoke in their effect. Smoke forced Phil to open his eyes, but it didn't allow him to see any better than normal. The shroom and it's synthetic cousin, had the effect of putting on a pair of glasses that improved everyones eyesight to at least 20/20. He remembered being in the K-Mart one halloween after eating shrooms and noticing everyone's little scars on their faces. Almost everyone has at least a small scar or permanent blemish and in his condition that day, he could see them like never before. He felt like Ted Williams or Clark Kent for a few minutes that evening.

When he first tried the stretching, the expression on Phil's face was one of a man being tortured. After a while though, it became an expression of serenity as he reached positions he had never reached before. It was like having a jacuzzi, a loofa backrub and a painless chiropractic adjustment all at the same time.

School of fish, for three strang days

Nirvana, "Ain't what you got, it's what you give."

Make it a dialogue not a diatribe.

"How do you keep those dogs from jumping up on the glass sliding doors?", Jill asked.

"I beat them", Phil said.

"Beat, them, what do you beat them with?", she wasn't sure how seriously to take him.

"Wood mostly", Phil replied, "but sometimes I use metal or other things".

Jill's mind conjured up images of wooden 2 x 4's, baseball bats and metal broom handles. Phil cracked a smile and Jill knew now for sure that he was joking.

"You know, I thought I got gas this morning on the way to work, but darn it I forgot the gas", Phil was on the make and he knew that he could admit to Jill that he had a smoke induced memory lapse.

With her such an admission was no big deal, whereas with Sharon, it would not be a good subject to bring up. Since she occasionally smoked herself, she did not have nearly the negative opinion about it as Sharon had. That was the thing they had in common that had brought them together in the first place.

Phil told her that he was, "prayerfully Looking forward to a heavenly afterlife."

One of the excersises that Phil was doing daily now, was to roll onto his back, extend his legs and grab hold of his ankle or feet. He still could not do this with his legs completely straight, but he could stretch enough to put a smile on his face and make his legs, neck and back feel a little better. This was about the minimum that he did daily at this point, he usually tried to do a few more stretches, such as the reverse of this one.

He found that it was easier to make his ears pop, if he inhaled through his nose.

"What is the real truth about religion?", Phil asked his mentor, "everyone seems to think that them and their's are going to Heaven and that everyone else is damned, who's right about all of these questions".

"Why don't we ever get an answer when we're knocking on his door?"

"The truth is almost always somewhere in between", the old man answered.

Phil settled back into his big swiveling office chair in the lotus position, he wanted to be comfortable while the old man continued his important explanation. But that was it and then the old guy was gone, just faded out of Phil's imagination.

"Hey come back here, face the music!", Phil said outloud to the vapor, "come back and tell me that again, don't cop out on me now". But it was too late the old man couldn't come back for a while since the rising son that Phil was calling was inside him not outside.

Phil tried to jog his mind to get the old man back, but he didn't know how to do it, in front of his face on the bulletin board was a postcard from the local church that said celebrate the rising son, but he didn't notice it and probably wouldn't have made the right connection anyway.-

We met as soul mates at Paris island and we left as inmates from an asylum.

WE dug in deep and shot on sight, and prayed to Jesus Christ... we said we'd all go down together. remember Charley remember Baker, they left their childhood on every acre

and who was wrong and who was right, it didn't matter in the thick of the night.

and the night seemed to last as long as six weeks on Paris island.

and we would all go down together, we said we'd all go down together.

it was ab

"You're a few years younger than me, but you'll catch up to me someday", Phil said.

"I don't get your point, if there is one", replied Vaughn.

"Time converges like the lines in a 'perspective' drawing, because eventually we all meet at one point on the astral plane and that point is death. Since you're younger, you might get there later than me, but you still will make it there, what I don't know is if for me that point is a black hole, heaven, hell or what", Phil told Vaughn.

"I have confidence that I know what awaits me", said the Pastor, "and that's eternity with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"I don't know if you're smarter, dumber, the same as me or something else", Phil told Richard, "and I don't care much either way."

Richard seemed to be getting more irritated as Phil kept talking, "I do believe that blacks are probably superior physically, based on evidence that I see around me and I'm not ashamed to admit believing what I believe on these subjects."

Another type of stretch that the old man showed Phil was the splits. The old man was excellent and could split like a gymnast. Phil started doing it and found it to be one of the most beneficial stretches of all.

The rulers on earth are just propped up by others of similar ilk and they are the last hurrah of that corrupt breed which has had the people of God in a stranglehold since the beginning of time.

"As arbitrary as I want to be", answered Phil. "I haven't seen any of my employees watch out for my welfare as much as they look out for their own, so I'll be as self-centered as they are in dealing with them."

"Won't Jesus be glad to see you, when you don't think you have a prayer"

"I'm going fishing", Phil said as he left the house and the quarrel he and Sharon were having. It was one place he could go to get away from her when she was having a fit. He'd carry the inflatable dingy on his back and paddle out to a secluded place in the 15 acre lake, where he couldn't hear her, even if she yelled at him from the bank.

"I'm probably less patriotic than the next guy", said Phil, "basically I don't think any country's as great as it's patriots make it out to be."

It's a place where you don't have to make excuses.

"In a nutshell, I think Christians may be better off than non-Christians, but I don't think they're any better", Phil baited the pastor.

Overthrow in the name of love", Phil said as he cut the smoke with seeds and stems.

You do this and you do that", said Vaughn accusingly, "I could get people to put a lot of heat on you for any of those things."

"Yeah, you could", said Phil without any fear, "and you only know the half of it."

Vaughn looked nervous, "what's the other half, better or worse than the one I know."

"That's for me to know and you to try and find out", Phil egged him on.

"Right now my only real business partners are my wife and my computer", said Phil, "my employees still have too much to learn about the business to be called potential partners."

"I may be too hard on them, but I don't think any of them are really on the ball".

"I think you're too easy on them if anything", said Sharon.

"Well, maybe, you're just a lousy manager", Vaughn chimed in.

"By the way what were you doing on the floor, when I came in", said Jack, "I know you were on the floor, because I could see you through the winow."

"What do you think I was doing", replied Phil a little irratated. He had the mini blinds down and plastic film on the windows to keep the draft out and he had assumed that this gave him a little privacy.

"Hell, I don't know", Jack laughed, "with you it's hard to tell."

"I was doing what most people do when they get down on the floor on their knees, so figure it out."

He had actually been stretching with the intention of praying too, but he hadn't gotten around to much of either one yet.

Mostly he had just been laying on his back and relaxing as the prelude to his stretching routine. Being a monday, his muscles were a little tight since he usually didn't do any stretching at home. Sharon would probably think any stretching was satanically inspired, so thus far he just did it at work. Because of this tightness, he had to take a minute or two just to lay on the floor and normalize his spines posture before attempting to do any stretching.

"I don't care what they do to me", said Jack, I probably deserve anything I get, I just can't bare to think of my loved ones suffering."

"I believe that I have both, very little right to questions anything the church tells me and I also have every right to question them, I just don't know which option I should exsercise. The culture that this church created, gave me every thing I have including guaranteeing my right to protest, so they are in some respect my master and probably the closest thing in this world to the masters voice.

"You're being unfair to us", the employee said.

"no I'm not", said Phil, "I try to treat all employees equal and give them work, raises and promotions based how much they do for me or on seniority if all other factors are equal."

"Well I've done as much as Clark, and now you're letting me go, that's not fair".

Phil answered him, "That's your opinion. I've gone through the ledger to see how much I've paid you and I've gone through my mind and reports to see how much you've produced for me, that's how I decided and I think it's fair."

"For one brief instant they think they're safe and warm,...the fire inside", Bob Seeger.

"Today and tomorrow matter, yesterday does not", the old man told Phil, "so don't let it consume you like a fire insdie, ...burning you up."

"Yeah, it looks like the consultants and the CEO'S are the only one's getting rich in todays tough business climate, it means we're all crooked or we're all smart", said Phil.

"No, it means you're a crook and it doesn't have anything to do with whether CEO's are crooks or not", Vaughn was right this time.

Now it's the straw that broke the camels back?" Phil questioned her',"is that what you're saying?'

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying, now it's starting to hurt us in the wallet and I'm not going to stand for it"

Phil looked her up and down and she looked him in the eye. "Well then maybe you should buy me a bag."

"Get a grip she yelled, you're ruining our lives."

"If I'm ruining your life by smoking leave me for that, if you're leaving you for not being a provider, but don't leave me for breaking the camel's back."

Sharon understood the gist of his remark, but saw it as being totally irrelevant, Phil wasn't sure of it's validity, but he used the argument anyway to try and save his skin, one more time.

If my work wasn't good, why didn't you tell me", said the employee.

"I didn't tell you, because some things go without saying."

"What do you mean", answered Tim defensively.

"I mean, that there have been a lot of things, and they've added up to the conclusion in my mind that you're in it for you and not for us and I need someone who I feel is a little more in it for us than I think you've been."

Sharon who was sitting in the room thought back to Phil's earlier comment about breaking the camels back and she was mad.

"Secretarys, preen and strut like peacocks in..." Sting

"And you may ask yourself, self how did I get here", David Bourne, the talking heads,..."same as it always was..." "And you may say to yourself, my God what have I done,

"Into the clear blue water, ... same as it ever was."

"And she said she was pretending, like she knew the plan", Eric Clapton.

When it looks like you're on easy stree, there's danger at the door, ... but what I want to know, is are you nice,... it's a buckdancers " the grateful dead.

"I've been in love a million, times, the only thing I have to do is remember my lines...give it up baby", ZZ Top.

I took a journedy out into the sea, I took with me the teacher, who found fun instead of me", Jethro Tull

Then the teacher told me he had a lot of fun, he thanked me for his ticket and all the things he done

They took your life, they could not take your pride", U2.

Phil decided not to get the visa account, or to work to keep either of his employees. Neither of them had proven himself yet, so he would rather not bust his butt to bring in enough work for them to be assured fairly constant work. He would instead try to keep the one that had proved that he could at least do a report on his own, even if he still needed a lot of help.

Phil would probably just have to go back to doing more of the telephone work himself. That was okay however, since he had never really stopped, doing it and he knew more shortcuts than anyone else. If the third employee panned out, maybe he could be kept in the network as a "project" basis employee. The key would be to keep a few people in the pipeline at all times that would agree to work on a project basis. This fit in very well with what he told his customers.

He just had to give the most work to those who did the best job for him and thus kept the customers happy.

As for the Visa, he figured that most people wouldn't mind paying by check, especially when he told them that the credit card company took 30% of his commission. Maybe there was a reason that one of the banks visa departments had 666-6666 as a phone number.

id I get here", David Bourne, the talking heads,..."same as it always was..." "And you may say to yourself,

It seemed quite possible that God would make the world so orderly and at the same time so incomprehensible. Why would he reveal his truth to a bunch of Hebrew desert dwellers and make it so uncomfortable for other nationalities to believe this truth.

It obviously was a little tougher for a Hindu or Moslem to believe that Jesus was the only true son of God born of a virgin. Especially when their nations often warred with the Christians and Jews. And why would God make it seemingly more difficult for hundreds of generations of people from Africa, China and elsewhere to get to heaven if as the Christians said, you have to accept Jesus and these people for two thousand years had not heard his name.

I wonder, Phil thought, if that's what God really says. The two thousand or so years of people not having a chance to hear his name might just be a drop in the bucket of time, but that's still a few billion people damned to hell and even though I'm a relativist, I see that as a lot of folks. Maybe in the future so many people from these nations would know Christ, that the hundreds of millions that the "know it alls" said were condemned to eternal damnation would be an insignificant number, but I hope it does not work that way.

Still it seemed that there might be other interpretations of the Bible that were possible, especially in view of the teachings of such people as Armstrong who held that the King James version was possibly mistranslated when it came to such important words as hell. You ought to just accept that you were lucky to be born in a Christian nation and do your best to enlighten the unbelievers said Vaughn. Phil scratched his head and pondered.

Phil told Vaughn, musicians should be more publically responsible. Music is really the "peoples" art more than anything else. So many young people are affected by music so much, they practically worship it. Painting, photography, dance and other forms are mostly esteemed by more mature people that aren't likely to do crazy things based on the feelings aroused by their art. Even a Maplethorpe exhibit is not quite as likely to cause someone to go off the deep end as easily as a rock song.

It seems to me that you'd be hard pressed to sell a religion like orthodox Christianity to people that revere their ancestors, like the Japanese and others. They are going to find the message rather strange, that all of their ancestors are burning in hell eternally, because they did not believe in a savior that they never heard of.

It's like them trying to scare people from thinking, debating, discussing ideas or writing. They say that if your ideas are not approved by them, then you are probably a false prophet or antiChrist. The end result is that people are often afraid to ask any questions or use their mind at all. Christianity obviously should be able to hold up to scrutiny.. Granted we may not understand everything in God's word, or be capable of such understanding, but do not crucify us for not accepting all of your "pat" answers as the Gospel.

As far as protecting democracy in our hemisphere, we're probably going to have to make a stand somewhere and defend it somewhere sometime. By having the Latin Americans fight each other are we selfishly putting off the inevitable to save another generation of American boys, by having people who generally may not give a damn kill each other. Phil said, "for once in my life I'd like to do something brave, just send me out and I'll fight for you General, with or without my knee operation, just send me out" maybe it's right, maybe it's not, but if going there now saves my son's generation from having to sacrifice themselves, then I'm ready to go, even if it doesn't solve anything, but just gives them some time".

Phil as usual had a tear in his eye, Sharon might or might not, he did not know cause he couldn't look at her. The segment of 20/20 was about a Unitarian minister and his books about life such as All he knows he learned in kindergarten or something like that. Phil was touched and of course in his mind couldn't imagine how anyone else couldn't be. But then it all depends on where you're sitting to view something. As soon as the words Unitarian minister came out of Barbara Walters mouth, the man undoubtedly lost a world of credibility in many peoples opinions, probably in Sharon's (just as a tent show evangelist would to an agnostic). To Phil it seemed a statement of the obvious, just as the previous segment on the man disconnecting his comatose son from a respirator was, just as the minister's analogy of our lives being like the life of the itchy bitsy spider going up the water spout and it's being washed down and it's trying again the next day when the sun comes out. It was all so perverse and all so simple and all so incomprehensible when we sit on opposite sides of the fence struggling like the car commercial that came on next, for the infinite quest for perfection.

Just learn from the kids when you can Phil said, they sometimes know the answer to how to conduct ourselves, when we don't. They take the natural course of action, while we often do what we think the people around us want us to do. Not just in how to behave, but also in how to do things like walk and breath. Phil noticed that Tyler always seemed to be pulling himself up tall and filling his lungs with a big blast of air. Just what he needed to face the giants he was surrounded by. Phil didn't recall many elderly people doing this, but the ones he'd seen were the most vibrant looking.

Phil also decided that he had to be as brutally honest as possible with the kids. So far he had tiptoed on the line of the truth and lies touching down often. He had to take responsibility for his decision to do the things he currently believed in like smoking and at least admit to his frailties to his children, even if it might not be the best thing to do. He still had to do what he thought was best and not some government or church prescribed law, just the 10 commandments

Vaughn's knee was feeling better since he smoked the weed. It still felt out of joint, but he was able to pull his foot up on his other knee and make it pop back in easier. Previously he had had so much trouble doing that, that he was considering having his knee operated on, now he didn't think he'd have to look into it. Vaughn (player that is same as Vaughn Van Lin Mar) always noticed improvements in his body and mind when he smoked just a little. But he eventually burns out from getting too much of a good thing.

He just had to be more assertive in the next year and go after the good things that he wanted. On the other hand, maybe he'd also try to get high a few times and maybe write more. That was the only way he was going to possibly achieve the goal he'd set in the resolution he'd told at the new years eve party. Hell, I'll just wait till I catch cancer from something in my food or in the air and then I can ask to have weed prescribed to me.

Vaughn was going to run on a platform, of taking the vote away from all women and from all men on public assistance. He reasoned that although the both might go completely nuts at the thought of someone mentioning this, it was the way things should be. Society would be better off not having these groups voting, for a number of very good reasons.

New years resolution for Phil, to start being a man. Despite the cliché sound of it, he thought it to be the most important thing. Stand up to Sharon, she might respect him for it she might divorce him for it, but he was resolving to do it. Women are fickle despite what they'd have us all believe. She might like him being the "man" of the house and being the undisputed leader. He knew he needed her advice and that he should take what she says very seriously, but he had had enough of being the subordinate under the law of the U.S.A. It was also time he thought as Vaughn had been telling him for a change in government. The only way to remove women's power over men and to eliminate the power of those permanently on public assistance was to vote them out or run them out. He didn't want to be treasonous, but that's what the current leaders who are kept in power by these two groups would call him. This in spite of the fact that when the republic was formed, women were not allowed to vote and there was no public assistance in the form of what there is today. With women alone over half of the voting population, there was no way to vote them out unless by their fickleness or wisdom they would vote themselves out of power. If that was the case, it wouldn't be necessary for the men to overthrow them. All that was necessary would be for the men in the army to do what the army in Romainia and elsewhere had done. Then the cheap politicians would change their tune and vote sanity instead of the will of their illegal constituents. The 70's and 80's were the decades of women's lib, well as Phil and Vaughn saw it, the 90's would be the decade of men's liberation.

INVENTION OF THE DECADE, a highway system that:

1. cuts accidents (collisions) by 99%
2. Saves energy, reduces pollution
3. still maintains drivers ability to have his own personal car and control over his speed, destination and choice of route.
4. Could be rail, slot car, magnetic, superconductor,

laser guided, etc. etc.
5. Should also be drunk/drug driver proof.

COLLISION AVOIDANCE SYSTEM ASPECT WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT IN THE LAST 20 YEARS ALONE, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN MORE PEOPLE KILLED IN CAR ACCIDENTS THAN IN ALL THE WARS AMERICA HAS EVER FOUGHT.

The succesful system could bring many jobs to construction industry in order to convert highway system to it. Also U.S. or whoever develops it first and best, could export it to world market.

No country or group of people have any moral superiority over any other Vaughn told Phil, because every human institution is corrupt and all men and women are corrupted in some way or another. As for Blacks, Vaughn didn't mind living with them. As long as they were the law abiding type. He was tired of being coerced into having to say that he believed that they were just like whites. We're different breeds just like a poodle aint a bulldog. Neither one's better or worse, just different and no one was going to stop him from saying that that's what he believed. Blacks were better in many ways physically in his opinion and he thought there was a wealth of evidence if anyone would care to open their eyes. Even though he thought all men were equal in God's eyes, he thought that they were created with important differences. The similarities were more important than the differences in his opinion, but the differences were very real and in many different areas. As for dealing with blacks, it was like dealing with the Russians, in his opinion, you'd better be awful well prepared for trouble if you don't want to have any. It was mostly the ones that preached violence and reparations that he didn't agree with. The ones whose stated or unstated position was war with the white man were the ones that he saw as his adversary and there were a lot of them. Just like there were probably a lot of whites with similar views. And maybe a few people on both sides like him, who felt that way on some days and not on other days, depending on what happened to them or what they saw on the news that day.

These pinstriped preachers are damning others for having an occasional drink, while they secretly cavort with hookers and live in palatial splendor, is it any wonder I'm sometimes reluctant to sit through two hours of his rantings, ravings, "tongues" and girations scolding everyone for not being just like him and threatening us with eternal torture if we don't tow his line.

What was the divorce rate before womens suffrage and what is it now. Our feminists have spoiled the punch and want to blame it on men. We now loose our families and have to pay for their upbringing and watch from afar. While women are working at home and at the plant and office. No one in these cases raises the kids. Men can't find jobs because they are competing with women who admitedly are highly qualified in some cases and in other cases promoted through affirmative action. Now the men can't support their family and the women can't either. We have opened a Pandora's box and now are dealing with a genii that's out of the bottle.

With over 50% of the votes, they have the advantage and politicians have to pander to them. The women on the other hand are even more likely to be swayed by demagogues than are men. This leads to an unnatural situation where the weak lead the strong through a system of special interest groups all wanting their way, not through a natural competitive system.. What is the problem with women running the show? Their sense of judgement is different than mens, their led by emotion more than reason very often and theri brains are just plain "wired" differently than men's. This did not in Phil's opinion make them inferior, but it was grounds in his opinion to fight for the right to try to

.. .

Phil stated simply, I know that I'm accountable to god, but I'm not going to live my life according to what any pastor or imam tells me to do. I'll do what my conscience tells me is what the scripture says. let the pastor tell everyone else how to live, he didn't think they necessarily know exactly what Jesus said or meant sometimes they were right on some times he thought they might be right off. Even if they were right on, the evidence for Jesus seems pretty tenuous at best, if you study the subject objectively.

To those who told him that he'd better not speak his mind or write anything that wasn't according to their interpretation of the scripture, he said phoeey. He was going to say his piece and pray that he was not, was not defying the laws of God

I know I can't live up to God's strict standards Phi said, but I still want to learn the truth of what he say's. You guys know you can't live up to his standards so you don't want to know the truth. You just go on celebrating the same pagan holidays that the Babalonians and Romans celebrated and've changed God's word to a state religion that Constantine and your cronies got started. You condemn people based on your cliques interpretation of your translation of the scriptures for things that aren't even mentioned in the books, yet you do things that are specifically forbidden in the books.

I've rarely seen you respond to situations, you just react Phil told Sharon. You're the proverbial atom bomb used on a fly.

Phil finished the dishes as Sharon applied her makeup, are you ready for church she yelled, yes he said, well get the kids ready she said. She was still getting ready, he was tired of doing house work which she assumed he should do as she put on her jace. Do that during your optional time, he yelled back.

The trade problem with Japan was both countries fault, but the cure should come from the U.S. not from Japan. It wasn't their fault that their country set up rules to assist their industry. The U.S. had anti-trust laws that were set up at a time when the U.S. had few if any real economic rivals and we had to protect ourselves against ourselves, things have now changed and we need regulations to protect us from other nations so we can compete effectively, not so that we are protected from internal monopolies. Otherwise we'll all be watching Japanese company men eating oysters Mitsubishi and we'll be sweeping up at Nip-Donalds.

This old earth is being stretched to the breaking point by mankind, at the rate we're going, we'll destroy it as a habitat for all living things including ourselves. It seems like there's going to have to be a big die off or a big fly off of mankind eventually Phil said.

Phil said to Vaughn, did you ever notice how some women drivers stay on your tail no matter how fast you're going and then when you pull over and let them pass, they invariably slow down 5-10 mph and just sit there. It's like they've got to pass you but when they do, they've lost the gumption to keep going at a fast speed. Yea said Vaughn, I've seen those kinds of drivers and the rest of them just poke along at 55.

They don't have the killer instinct said Phil, they can't finish you off, they just pass you then block you till you have to pass them, it's like they're unconsciously playing a game, they want to get ahead but they don't really want to.

Yea we've got the killer instinct said Vaughn, it's just a male thing. Whether it's tennis or golf or football, we just want to crush someone. Yea said Phil, it must be a pretty basic male thing, cause when I get out of bed on the wrong side or see something I don't like on the news, I want to kill people sometimes

lots of them or people close to me and I think I might really do it if I had the chance at some of those times. Yea guys are like that said Vaughn, we don't really feel that way very often but sometimes we do, women I don't think have an urge to wipe people out very often.

Phil was talking to his son, I've made a lot of mistakes he said. Most of them were moral or human mistakes, not technical mistakes or mistakes in calculations. No they've been mistakes in judgement that I feel bad about now.

The saddest moment that Phil could recall at the time was the moment when he was about 7 when it occurred to him that some day he might see his mother in a coffin or see a coffin and know that his mother who at that moment was the most important person or thing in his life, that she would be in it. Anybody who's had a loving mother, must arrive at that sickening moment of truth sometime. It's like in the song Circle be Unbroken.

The secretary at the telephone ans service in CA, sounded like she was experienced in the ways of the world and her voice was tough and smug. She knew that Phil wasn't really doing what he said he was doing and Phil knew she was on to what he was doing. But she didn't let on at least not to him and he figured her attitude was just her way of not letting the things that went on around her get to her, kind of like a bar manager.

When he saw the seeming chaos around him, Phil wondered if there was a reason for it in God's plan. Why did God make a world that although "ordered" it was also full of chaos and suffering. Even when things were not interfered with by man, there was often what seemed to him as terrible suffering in the world of nature. Animals starving in times of drought and sometimes painful lingering deaths at the hands of predators that weren't too good at what they did.

But on the other hand, it seemed that it was the strong animals that suffered the most like a Cape Water Buffalo being dragged down by a pride of lions, but holding on for hours as it was climbed on by the lions who had a heck of a time pulling down but finally did in the most gruesome way.

The weak animals however like the smaller antelope, seemed to usually die faster and with less suffering since they couldn't put up much of a fight. Just like in the Bible, the strong would be last and the weak would be first. The Willow and the gazelle bend and don't suffer so, but the lion and the oak fight on and crack finally.

Did God make the animals so perfect? It seemed to Phil that they were in many ways as lazy and inefficient in their natural tasks as man was in his pursuits. They animals if they were really "with it" would fare much better than they do. The deer if he was really as alert as he should be, would hardly ever be caught by his slower foes and the leopard if she were really keen at stalking would seldom miss her prey. But both are relatively unsuccessful. Even in their prime after they've learned most of the tricks of their trade, they mess up and are caught off guard.

Lord you've made us in your image and a little lower than the angels. You've given us the volition to choose our own path's. You hunger for a relationship with us, but we must make the choice to seek you. You've allowed us that choice. Why then do you make it harder for some to choose you. Why do you make the penalty so grave if we choose wrongly. Why do some have to go thru like with such a yoke while others because of their backgrounds are led so naturally towards accepting you.

You say that a fair God would not place almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of one man's acceptance of faith and make the path so easy for others. But the word tells us that God won't make any tribulation greater than each man has the strength to bear. If the "leap of faith" seems too hard, it may be because God knows you are really the strong type that can withstand the longest suffering and the greatest of assaults on your inkling of faith on your road to salvation. Mom's faith was shaken off it's foundations because of the tragedies she has suffered in her life. But she is also one of the strongest and wisest people I've ever known. She just needs to see that her strength and goodness, comes not so much from within her, but instead accept that these qualities are from God. He put them there to give her what it takes to survive and learn from the tragedies.

"IT'S ALL THEIR FAULT"

You say I'm always talking down my society, that's because it's the only one I'm familiar with. If I was in some other society I'd criticize it,, if they'd let me. "I'm sure" said Vaughn, "that when the Soviets move into the U.S. in the late 1990's because we've caused our own collapse while strengthening them, they or their flunkies will take care of me anyway". Thats one of the great things about the U.S., all you have to worry about is if they'll publish your shit. Most likely they'll think it is shit and won't.

You say I'm showing my true colors and you criticize me for that. Maybe you should have interviewed me more thoroughly before we hitched up. Then you'd have realized that you weren't going to like my "true colors", becasue they don't agree with your true colors.

"You need to get your priorities in oreder", Sharon told Phil. "No you mean I need to make your priorities my priorities" said Phil. "I'm just trying to wrestle back for men the rights that women have extorted from us over the last 200 years, Washington would be rolling in his Mount Vernon grave if he could see what they've done to his country".

"You deride me for being two faced, while with you it's what you see is what you get", said Vaughn to Bill. "But I think it's more that with me there's more than meets the eye, you're just like all the other bloodthirsty sheep in your heard".

Why did the Hebrews all live to be 700 years old and their contemporaries in China, Babylonia, Egypt and elsewhere only live normal lifespans according to those societies records.

That's why I want a pastor who'll tackle tough questions with openness and honesty and not just placate with tired old platitudes. I don't want a pastor whose purpose is to sell afterlife insurance under the pretense of saving my soul. I don't want an apologetic who's a master at swimming in circles around questions and whose last resort is to accuse me of trying to be an intellectual if he can't answer a question.

"Just speak your mind", said Sharon. " It's hard for me to" said Phil, "when I'm surrounded by a monolithic block of like minded people (mostly your relatives), who proudly assert that they "know it all" and that anyone who disagrees is damned. Many of whom look at you with scrunched up faces and narrowed eyes as if you're stupid, unpatriotic and a heathen if your not in their fold.

Why didn't God give more instructions to Adam and Eve about staying away from the apple tree and to be wary of the serpent. Or did he and the Bible not record it for some reason ? He created man with the ability to choose his own actions and he also created him with many weakness's that man can not easily

control. How could God expect man and woman not to be beguiled by the serpent unless he gave them much more in the way of advanced warning.

The clerics want us to return to the Dark Ages. They reject science but they use technology to further their power.

Try to temper your anger and sarcasim because it won't change people.

George Washington might be spinning. Don't ask to run things, when 99% of the dead soldiers that won your freedom have been men. And don't say there wouldn't be so many wars if women ran things. We all know that women are just as treacherous and irrational as men in achieving their ends and their desired ends are just as self-serving as men's.

If Jesus is the only hope for peace , than it'll always end up business as usual, unless his message was greatly distorted.

Phil had a chance in 9th grade ball he didn't hold a grudge against the coaches. They gave him a chance but they had to go with the kid most likely to help them win. That was Rick, smaller but quicker and more motivated than Phil was. Phil hung it up after 9th grade football but to some extent always regreted his lack of sports prowess and achievement like so many other would be jocks.

The only thing Sparky had in common with normal breeds of dogs was that she needed love. Other than that she was a different kind of critter than any dog Phil had ever had. So far she seemed dumber or else just much more stubborn. The kind of dog that in Jack London stories gets trained with a club.FC

I know whats right said Bill. Oh you certainly do said Vaughn and I'm sure you wouldn't hurt a flea unless he was preventing you from doing what's right, then you'd smash him or anyone else to bits.

You can try to pass on the wisdom of the ages to your kids and inevitably fail, because any one of us only can understand very small part of that truth. The best you can do is try to pass on all you can of a few of the very best examples of good that you personally have been exposed to. In Phil's life that was undoubtably the Gospel of Christ.

If the kids turned out okay, then that was great. If not then he hoped he could cope with the inevitable grief that would come with the kind of losses that parents often experience in their relationships and experiences with the children that they love and try to nurture.

He used to think that it was sufficient to just do his part and have kids and try his best to raise them. He hadn't changed much in the belief that this was more important than making it big in any other way.

"My beliefs seem to change almost daily", Phil told Sharon.

"I don't know if that is good or not" he told her. "I'm told by the religionists around me that I have to believe

unequivicably in their unchangeable truths, but I'm having a hard time slipping away from my attraction to a certain amount of fuzzy logic".

You're all just slinging mud at each other, said Phil and you think that you're in the right to do it because your group has the biggest hands.

God gives us the right to believe whatever we choose to believe in and you can't rightfully force anyone to do what you think is right. All you have the right to do is to defend yourself against others if their actions endanger you.

There is no responsible way to engage in the use of pot and other mind altering drugs. Pre and extra-marital sex also can not be engaged in without overwhelming risks, all that can be done is lowering of the risk to a still unacceptable level of bodily and emotional risk.

This being said, it's unlikely that either sexual or mind altering activities can be controlled by legislation.

Maybe Jesus used wine because it may be possible to use it responsibly.

Kerchal was a spider and not a very happy camper. It was as you might guess a drag being a spider. Capturing your prey in a sticky web, biting them with your poisonous fangs and then sucking the juices out of them. Rather a distasteful existence for a nice guy like Kerch.

This particular night, Kerchal did most of his work at night, he was getting started on a new web in Phils bathroom. Kerchal had started from a piece of wood molding over the door and intended to string the first strand of web from the door molding over to the light fixture in the middle of the room. He rubbed his bottom on the molding and extruded a glob of web gel onto the surface. Then in his best spiderman fashion, he leaped off the molding and onto the ceiling, his sticky claws grabbing into the ceiling plaster.

Now he had to crawl over to the center of the ceiling where the light fixture was without letting his bottom touch the ceiling. This was so that the web strand that he was extruding would not stick to the ceiling, if it did his planned web design would be ruined. Finally he arrived in awkward fashion at the light fixture and had to make a great leap once more to reach the high point on it where he would attach the strand.

He made the leap successfully and stopped there for about a minute to catch his breath. His mission was accomplished for the moment and he would return to it later, right now, the sound of a fly caught in one of his other webs caught his attention and he scurried off to have his next meal.

Friday morning was here and Phil was about his duties getting ready to go to work. After the shower and shave he feed the dog and after kissing the family goodbye he was off to work. They would be going camping right after work and Sharon was busy packing and getting the kids off to school.

As Phil got out of the car and walked towards his office, his arm got caught in the web of a big spider that he had dispatched with a rolled up newspaper yesterday. It was an ugly thing and he had wacked it against the telephone pole that it was sitting on. Phil had nothing against spiders unless they invaded his space and then he went off on them.

Kerchals strand was the next thing that touched his arm as he went to the bathroom a minute later. It came down as he accidentally brushed against it. Phil gave it little thought but Kerchal watching from a crack in the ceiling was devastated, all that work for nothing.

everyone should faygo at least once between the ages of 18 and 88, it's your only way to know if you can do what you want to do, if you succeed, great, if not thats okay too, then you just go ahead and explode into space like everyone else has done. you've got a chance to make it big, and a few people do, but the vast majority just become part of the vastness of space, that is they become part of the mainstream of human flotsam and jetsum, which is okay too.

it's funny said phil to vaughn that the christians are about the staunchest supporters of the military industrial complex. i know the old testament and the new testament refer many times to justice, strength and an eye for an eye in some cases, but jesus also refers to turning the other cheek and the like and i don't see much of that message being adapted by the average christian these days, unless it fits in with his politics in general.

blacks and whites are different in my opinion said phil. i don't care if you call me a racist or not. i'm proud to say that my loyalty is more to my own people and i think that if you would care to admit it, most peoples loyalty is to their own people. because when the going gets rough, you're a little more likely to get a break from one of your own than from someone else. sure i think we should all give and take a little and learn to live together in peace. that's far better in my opinion to slugging it out, but i also think that the give and take should be according to the standard rules of negotiation that all parties world wide adhere to. that means drive a tough bargain and keep a strong defense because if you don't the other side is going to stick it to you. if they want affirmative action then they've still got to be the best qualified for the job and that's by the traditional standards, not by some bogus ones that the special interest groups make up. in phil's not so expert opinion, blacks had proven themselves generally superior in physical attributes and generally inferior in mental ability, in both cases this is for when the measurement is traditional western standards, which is what phil felt were the best standards around.

phil had just done a couple of one hits with a visitor and now was getting back to work on cleaning the apartment, he wanted to get it rented out and it was a huge mess.

phil planned on lying about what he was doing if sharon asked. (robin, if you read this, im only kidding...)!

on the radio the preacher was wailing about going to heaven or going to hell. it's your choice , he said, you can accept jesus and stop living your life of sin and you'll get there. or he continued, you can keep on sinning and you'll go to hell. his thick southern accent was still strange sounding , but it didn't bother phil anymore. not like southern accents had bothered him for years. the south to phil almost represented a separate country within the us. you know phil continued to himself, with all the civil war stuff.. but they south sure seemed to have better expressions and sayings than the north had. the only one he'd ever met up-north that could come up with ones as good as the south's was a man that worked driving a truck for the sewer department in his home town. anyway the preacher was describing to the audience what a person taking a trip through hell would hear from the residents.

phil believed he would have to face his maker some day sooner or later, but he had about had it with religious leaders of all kinds telling everyone what he had to do to go to heaven. heavens going to be an awfully select place he thought, there weren't many people he'd ever met who would meet the standards of some of the preachers. he just wanted to be a normal living guy and still make it there, he didn't know if that was possible, but most of the time that was the best he could do. most of the time, he was still failing to meet all but the most minimum of standards.

that however was how it was and no one was going to tell him what morals to have. he knew his need improving, but he still wasn't going to be ordered around in this area!!!

on the radio the pastor was continuing to preach about if it was legal and proper to legislate pornography. the preacher said it was legal, proper and biblical to legislate morals, phil agreed it was too, at least in the area of porno. but he was not so sure about his pet vice, pot. he wanted to have his cake and eat it too.

sharon was likely to bite off his head if she called the apartment and spoke to him on the phone when he was stoned. he decided it would be better to head out and get a burger instead and then finish cleaning the refrigerator and stove.

what it boiled down to was that he presently could not seem to meet their high standards and didn't think it likely that he ever could, so be it.

phil didn't mind telling sharon that he wanted to make his living as a writer and painter.. it just seemed like such nonsense though to sharon since she had never seen or read anything good that phil had done. is that stupid book you're writing an autobiography she asked. "yes, i mean no not entirely", he answered her.

as far as the girls having some say in the new business, phil didn't mind. they might as well get everything out in the open right now. if the girls were kgoing jto be involved, they'd better talk about the specifics now.. maybe he and jack could switch back and forth every year or two as president and vice president and the girls jcould take terms being ceo and treasurer. that way they reasoned, it would be a minority owned business, since sharon and kathy would have 51% ownership between them and phil and jack would have 49%.

everyone wanted to be in on it, because they all felt that it was going jto prvide them with financial security if it worked. they were also a little worried that if things went bust they all loose out. this made everone want to have a say in the business's matters. "fine" said phil, but then we're all going to have to share the risk the same too".

decriminalize pot he thought to hiumself. (funny how hitting the wring key in typing can do more damage than messing up letters when you scribble.

"yea" jack said, i wish they would decriminalize pot. i don't think it's any worse than drinking, and i don't think the goverment should therefore give you any kind of arrest record or prison term, you should at most just have to pay a small fine. not any worse than a parking ticket, like they've tried in the past. that way society is still officially saying it's wrong, but they are not making a moral commandment. this way i don't feel compelled to lie to my kids about something that i'm doing that's against the law, but not in my opinion immoral. it came down to the powers that be, again trying to legislate my morals, why don't they worry more about enforcing the law against violent criminals, including anyone that commits real crimes while high. drinking laws address the problems related to drinking halfway responsibly, at least they have age laws. you could do the same with pot, just control it's sale, provide drug education to teach kids not to start and then leave users alone unless the commit violent or theft etc. just like drinking laws leave the responsible users alone unless they mess up. the government could even make millions or billions in taxes and smoking tickets.

phil was finally getting around to the job at ahdn after eating his hardees lunch, cleaning some windows and writing some nonsense in his ongoing book. he didn't mind that sharon knew about his book, he just wished that she'd not go around telling everyone else about phil's peculiarities. if he ever started making a living at it, she could tell anyone she wanted to.

he had cranked the radio so he could be entertained while he cleaned the kitchen appliances. just then the pastor who was interested in the apartment knocked on the door. "come in" phil shouted over the music. the pastor looked disappointed in phil. "oh, so you like loud rock music" the pastor said. he was about 20 years older than phil and the generation gap was apparent. "i'll bet you smoke pot too" the pastor said as he sniffed the still smitten air. that's kind of a personal question" said phil. he was starting to wonder if he'd made the right decision in telling the pastor that he could rent the apartment. things could get a little sticky.

THE NEW YEARS EVE PARTY

"Mama Mia, Papa Pia", Phil said jokingly as they got ready to go to the party. Joey was brushing his teeth and he stopped long enough to complete the rhyme. "Baby's got the diareha", the six year old chimed in. "Oh no!", said Phil, "I didn't know you knew that one".

"Sure dad, I know them all", said little Joey.

"You need to watch what you say around him", Sharon scolded. "He listens to everything you say".

"I know", Phil replied a little irritated, "so I'm not perfect, are you?"

Phil already was getting the feeling that this night was going to end up with the big "I'm going to live my own life with you or with our you", statement.

The tension that usually developed before a party night was already creeping up on them. It left an air of uneasiness they would have to cut through if they wanted to have an enjoyable night out.

"Dad, who do you want to win the game tonight", Joey said as he watched Phil put on his Colts hat. "I want the good guys to win", Phil answered. He really had no great affiliation for the team yet, the family had only been in the city for one year now and the Colts were not winning many games.

"Who are the good guys dad?", Joey asked sounding slightly confused. "They're the ones that comb their hair and brush their teeth and clean behind their ears!", Phil laughed.

"Dad, can I be a writer too when I grow up", Joey wondered out loud. "Sure", said Phil, "just go out and have some adventures so you'll have something to write about and be sure you live through them. Then even if you don't end up writing about them, you'll at least have stories to remember". Joey had been asking Phil to read some of his journal notes out loud and the child had gotten a kick out of the concocted stories, that is the ones that Phil didn't censor.

At 8:30 Phil, Sharon and the kids arrived at Jack and Lisa's for the New Years Eve party. The party almost never came off, due to an argument between the guys and the gals over the type of refreshments to be consumed. Phil and Jack preferred the stronger varieties and the girls wanted less emphasis on getting wasted. "Don't bring anything illegal in this house or I'll call my dad in a skinny minute and have him pick me and the kids up!"

The gals didn't want Phil, Jack and anyone else to get too crazy, especially since the kids would be there although they would be asleep. Phil and Sharon had a running argument about smoking and it seemed to him that she was herself as intoxicating as any drug he had ever tried. Phil had gotten a chuckle out of Jack when he compared women to a drug "yeah, they're the ultimate aphrodisiac", Jack had replied in agreement.

"They're more than just an aphrodisiac drug", Phil continued, they're the alpha and the omega of drugs and they don't want any competition from anything else that can go to your head".

The girls preferred going to parties with the people they knew from church, punch and cake and games type of parties.

"Why do you have to get wasted?", Sharon had asked him earlier in the day as they shopped for queso and chips.

"What are you going to do at the church party next week", she asked him, "you'll have to be sober all evening.

"I don't mind being sober at their party", Phil shot back, "but it is nice to be around real people and they usually don't act very natural, it's like their so up tight".

A drunk man at a party isn't much different than a preacher on a roll thought Phil. They both are like broken records; both only talk, neither listens and they both think they know it all. Phil had come to the conclusion that religious people from all backgrounds were equally bloodthirsty.

"I'm not getting wasted", he answered irritably, "but if you're going to put conditions on what I can and can't do, then I'll just stay home". It was a common argument between them. "I don't mind if your churchfriends come to", Phil went on, "I'll party with anyone as long as they don't turn me in".

Jack's brother and his fiancée, Rhonda, were coming too and that was part of the problem, since they were hard core partiers and proud of it.

Bill and Rhonda arrived at 10:00, along with another friend.

Rhonda was quick off the marks, "I'm singing bass tonight" she informed the roomfull of people, "I've got laryngitis".

It would turn out that she talked a blue streak regardless and fancied herself as chic, despite her plain looks. "She must think big boobs go a long way" thought Phil.

The chic who played Vicky Dale in the Batman video was pretty damn hot thought Phil. He could watch her all day, Even with that rather ugly look that she had on her face when the joker pointed the gun at her.

Sharon hadn't noticed him watching the vide so intently, but she sure noticed him get up in a hurry to go out and burn one. "I wouldn't have gone outside so abruptly, except that at the rate that Rhonda was talking, I would have missed it all if I waited for her to come to a stopping point".

"Lisa thinks Rhonda knows what she's talking about", said Sharon. "I'm surprised to hear that", Phil replied.

"Yeah, Rhonda's smart and and she even called herself aggressive" Sharon went on, "I like that in a lady, although personally, I prefer to just be assertive of my rights".

"Assertive, aggressive, what's the difference", said Phil.

"Either way, you all have the right to ruin a guys life with one phone call to your lawyer".

"Don't start that", Sharon said. "I can't help it if your a wimp". It was New Years Eve and soon the champagne would be flowing.

"Well anyway", said Phil, "I wouldn't go along with any of what Rhonda had to say" last night. "Thats funny", Sharon teased, "you were nodding your head everytime she opened her mouth".

"Just humoring her", Phil replied.

Phil had resorted to going to Jack's bathroom to write in peace. Between Sharon's looks and the probability of making everyone else think he was a kook, he decided it was better to find a private place for a couple minutes to jot down his thoughts before he forgot them. "Too much aggrivation", he thought, "a man can't do anything in peace".

Rhonda's advice on raising children sounded hollow to Phil. She was an ice skating instructor and trained kids for competion. Her clients were the children of the New York rich. "I don't need children", she had said. "I already have seventeen of them", she went on. "They listen to me like I'm a general and they'll worship me when I'm ninety, why should I have my own?"

She was profuse with her opinions on raising the "dear little devils", but Phil wouldn't pay an ounce of salt for advice compared to Lisa's or Sharon's, who between them were raising six little ones.

There was a loud knock on the bathroom door, "hey what are you doing in there!", shouted Rhonda, "writing a book or something!".

"Damn it", muttered Phil to himself. "Sharon must be telling everyone".

He reacted angrily, "I'll be out in a minute, so get lost!"

Phil generally was less polite to women who were not super pretty. A chauvanist to the core Sharon called him. Phil wrote feverishly to get the last lines down on the napkin so that he could leave the bathroom in a reasonable amount of time and save face when he rejoined the others. Meanwhile he was getting hung up on words. Phil didn't like a lot of adjectives in his writing, he thought that good writing shouldn't require any. He wanted to achieve the kind of sparse hard hitting and descriptive language that he heard in the oral story telling of country folk. In his opinion they had the best expressions, not real wordy, but really on the mark.

Soon the gang was going outside to burn another one, since Lisa had made the house off-limits for smoking. Phil decided to pass on a buzz this time. It would be a good test of his will and would score a point or two with Sharon although that wasn't important at this point. "I probably should limit myself to smoking once a month at the most, instead of every two weeks", he thought to himself. Phil didn't want to announce his intentions to Sharon, since it would probably be self-incriminating, he would rather plead the fifth.

At his lowest point years ago, he had average about 5 times a day, so in his opinion he'd come a long way, but Sharon still was far from satisfied.

"New Years resolution?", said Phil. "Yeah, I'm renewing the one I made last year and this time I hope to make it work!"

"I don't remember what your resolution was last year", Sharon said puzzled. "It was to be as real man for a change, and not let anyone run my life or censor me", he said proudly. "Oh God, give us all a break", Sharon groaned.

"Look", said Sharon, "you know I hate the way you act when you smoke, I don't understand why you do it when you know how much I hate it. I wouldn't do anything like that if it bothered you so much!"

Phil considered for a few seconds and then spoke, "honey, why don't you tell me why you hate the way I act when I smoke and maybe I can change the way I act. That's going to work better than trying to get me to stop".

that at the rate that Rhonda was talking, I would have

are intertwined. I am not in enough agreement with their religion and their politics to join. I hope they will still accept my wife and kids, since they want to be accepted there.

"I'd rather not present you with a list of differences that I have with the church (if he did, it would make Martin Luther's list seem very short), I'd rather just say that I'm not like minded enough to join any church that I have visited. I wish that were not the case, because I'd like to go somewhere to worship God, but I have yet to find a place where I'd feel a part of a church family, which seems to includes being somewhat like-minded with the the churchgoers. If I find such a church I'll join, it is likely that there is such a church, but I am content to be a visitor at this church, because I might never find one where Sharon and I would both fit in.

"You're assuming you're welcome here", said Vaughn.

"Fine, I'll stop coming here", Phil said with complete conviction, not thinking that Vaughns church was much more than a self-righteous mutual admiration society. The church was not going to change and Phil wasn't either. Why stay there and be browbeaten continuously. He was generally more liberal than the churches standards and their was no reason fooling himself or the church by becoming a member in what the pastor called their "corporate" church.

"Church is not supposed to be political, it is supposed to be about your relationship with God", Vaughn said. "If you were sincere, you would keep your politics out of it and accept Christ and his church.

"If I knew for sure that the organized church really is Christ's church I'd want to join. But you know as well as I do that church and politics are inexorably intertwined. Since the church believes it is dead right about everthing and that there's only black and white, never grey, then I think I'll pass. If I'm going to join an organization that asks for complete submission to their beliefs, I want to be sure that I really believe in their beliefs on hell, evolution, politics and everything else. If I'm not like minded with them, I shouldn't join.

I do not believe in Jesus and God anymore, and I don't want to belong to this church. The church is too military. Too militany and too militant. Always was and still is. Jesus said to evangelize and he may

have meant protheletize anyway that's what they do. And your patriotism can be bullshit too. It's only honorable to be a patriot, if your country is doing the right thing. To be patriotic when you country is in the wrong makes you a scoundrel, look at Nazi Germany and all the good patriots there. Look at every war and you'll find at least one side is patriots gone crazy. It seems to be built in to the human psychy, just like lust and bravery and love and everything else.

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"You need to join a church, the Bible commands it", Vaughn said. "Then I guess I'd better keep looking for some people that I think like, because I'd be betraying you and me if I joined yours."

Phil, retracted his statement a little, "I'm sorry Vaughn, it's nothing personal, I'm sorry that I made it sound that way. It's just that a man's relationship with God is very personal and important and I'm not ready to have you lead me in a brand of religion that I'm not comfortable with. I'm a square peg and I won't fit into a round hole."

"Oh, I feel sorry for you,

You can't put a square peg in a round hole", Phil said.

"What do you mean?", Vaughn wondered.

"I'd rather not answer any of your questions right now. I want the freedom to worship however I want, so I'll worship alone if necessary.

"As far as womens right to vote, I don't care much either way, but I'll tell you one thing, it's one right `I wouldn't fight to defend, let them do it, it wasn't in the original Constitution.

"You ingrate, women supported men 100% and helped win the Revolution, you're an ungratefule bastard.

"That may be, but I still don't know if I'd fight for womens liberation, not if it keeps trying to de-liberate me.

Violence should never be used, because as the name implies, violence is a violation.

That's absurd", Vaughn said. "That's about as polly-anna a statement as I've ever heard.

"Heard, absurd, violence, violation", said Sharon speaking from her vantage point on the issue.

"They're all just plays on words".

"You're just sore at the word because it won't let you go out and whore like you'd like to", Vaughn pointed out to PHil.

"I don't know what you're talking about", Phil countered.

"That's right, you can't have it both ways", Sharon agreed, you need to make up your mind you've got to be for the word or against it, get off the fence!"

Tire of being a degenerate, Phil wanted to surrender, but wanting to have things his way, he tried to rationalize the issue.

Hey I don't like like watching a cow being milked, that's gross to me and it's a bit un-natural, so whats the difference between that and you being grossed out by sex. There's a limit to what they should be allowed to show and who you can show it to, but you can't stop it all, just censor the grossist of it and all the garbage that mixes sex with violence.

He still wanted to surrender and said he had.

GOOFAS AND GALLANT OF THE 90'S

Amazingly Goofus and Gallant were still in the magazine at the doctors office. Their hair styles which had been etched in Phil's memory from the 60's had been updated for the 90's, hair was still very important in the culture. Just as it had 25 years ago, the cartoon showed the good boy Gallant with his perfect behavior and hair contrasted to the bad behavior and permanent bad hair day of Goofas.

THE ISHMAEL FACTOR

Phil didn't understand a lot of things, including the Bible, was it the inspired word of God, the literal word of God, a literary history of the ancient world with or without a Jewish bias. He didn't know, he also didn't know if he was a wild ass of a man because he was of arab descent or was he a genuine valuable human being like any Jew, Christian or Moslem or whatever considered himself. Strictly speaking, Phil believed he was not made less equal than other humans by the creator, but he knew that God's logic was beyond him, so that definitely could be true. It was possible that he was the lesser man that some called him or the scum that some called him. He knew one thing though, he was not going to take man's word for it or some ecumenical councils word for it. It was time to play hardball afterall, the organized self-rightous had taken enough innocent blood, ask the blacks, indians, arabs, hippies and God knows who else. For every just drop they had spilled they had spilled ten-thousand innocent drops.

I compare the man on the radio calling in to the talk show ranting about his religion is the only true one and everyone else be damned, to the ancient Roman who may have raved at Jesus that the only true religion is Zeus or Apollo and so on.

LIKE A MAD MAN LAUGHING AT THE RAIN

Phil was considering leaving things laying around, just so that Joey or Sally would catch him. Anything was better than never discussing it with them at all.

Faith is a commodity available always but used much less than it should be. It is a bell shaped curve, some people have it in addundance and some never get a handle on it and most people spend their lifes somewhere in between. God doesn't need apologists, only cults and religions do.

Phil was keeping an archeological record in the form of notebooks, computer disks, audio and video recordings and a few postcards. On the radio they talked about moving 400 units of homeless to Fort Ben, the other radio commentator called them individuals, then one of them called them people.

"I only have three men left", said Joey refering to his video game. "I'll be ready to play basketball real soon if I keep dying at this rate."

The first guy to download, started in his basement with a little ingenuity and some second-hand medical equipment like respirators, incubators and petri dishes.

Phil was leaving the little piles of dog poop on the floor most of the time. It was not his job to pick up Sharon's cousin's dog's poop and having it laying all over the house would make it easier for him to remember and say no next time anyone with a dog asks to move in with them.

It had been a typical morning, at least for Phil. The morning had started off strangely, but for him that was par for the course.

"What time will you be back tonight?", Sharon quieried.

"I'll probably be back at 6:30", Phil answered. Simulaneously, he lifted the mug to his mouth and took a drink.

"Owwwwwww !", he silently screamed. "Son of a blank", he added. His lips were burning from the hot water that he had just drank by accident. Phil was not the kind of guy to want his wife to see him do something so stupid, so he had muted his scream, she heard anyway.

"What was that Phil?", Sharon wanted to know.

"Nothing honey, this tea is just hotter than I thought", he lied to cover up his mistake. He got caught doing enough stupid things as it was, his philosophy was, there is no reason to add to the list.

In the morning Phil always filled his cup with water first and drank that before having any tea. It was something he had seen on a commercial one time, the sexy young woman in it elegantly stated that she just liked the essentials. She drank pure clear water in the morning and ate another pure essential for breakfast every day, some special something cereal that she was advertising.

Phil had unfortunateely picked up the hot water mug that was fresh out of the microwave and zapped for two minutes on high. The other mug had cold water in it, but due to whatever, he had drank from the wrong one. Phil had to lean over the sink and run cold water over his burned lips and tonge for a minute before he was able to continue the tea brewing process. Phil had just switched from coffee to tea a month ago, although he had drank tea occaisonally for years. Now after learning that green Japanese and Chinese tea might have a substance in it that helps ward off lung cancer, he had made the switch.

The tea which he had bought at a Japanese grocery store in Fort Lee, was not in tea bags and he had to add it to hot water in a tea strainer. Phil's microwave method of brewing tea, required two tea mugs. The water was heated in one mug and poured through a strainer into another and then back again if necessary to get the remaining tea leaves out. Sometimes there were still a few tea leave bits left in the cup, which became food.

Phil drove south on the Garden State Parkway returning home from a day of appointments in Manhattan.

It had been a long day, he had left his house at the Jersey shore very early to pick up some company brochures. After that he rushed the three blocks to the train station to catch the Erie Lackawana

express. The train took him to Hoboken stopping only twice in Summit and Newark. It beat the local train with it's five additional stops by ten or fifteen minutes.

From there it had been a race with all the other commuters to the PATH station for a subway trip under the Hudson River and finally the F train to Rockefeller Center.

It had been a pretty good day in the city for him. He had three meetings and time for a one hour side trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The expanded medieval armor collection had been Phil's stop. He pictured the Crusaders and the Moslems fighting over the holy places and Japanese Samurai's engaged in their mortal combats.

Phil had visited three Japanese trading companies that day and had come back with a request for a proposal for market research on metal stamping machines. The chances were good that he would get an order for survey of the U.S. metal stamping industry, just another market that his Japanese clients were trying to "penetrate".

Phil was relaxed, switching back and forth between the conservative and liberal talk shows, getting two distinctly different spins on the events of the day.

"Who's right", he thought to himself with a chuckle, trying to analyze for himself the events that the talk show hosts were discussing. Suddenly the smile on his face disappeared as he was jolted by the loud screech of sirens and the dazzle of flashing dashboard lights right behind him.

There were just seconds for him to stash his contraband, but he managed to dispose of it in his pre-planned manner.

"Get out of the car!", a man in a plain suit authoritatively yelled.

"Geez!, what I'd do", Phil said with genuine concern. It was frightening to be pulled over by an unmarked car.

"What's your name!", another plain clothesman ordered.

Pudding and tame, ask me again I'll tell you again, popped into his mind, but he thought better and cooperated completely.

"Phil Glencoe, Sir", he answered.

The leader and the others pulled out their wallets and flashed their badges in Phil's face, FBI their badges said.

"What's going on?", Phil inquired, both panicky and confused.

The main agent responded, "it has come to the bureau's attention that you are a frequent visitor at many Japanese companies. Our operative's have confirmed this and we have been instructed to take you into custody for questioning."

Phil was flabbergasted to say the least, "what's wrong with doing business with Japanese companies? I've done nothing wrong." He hoped that he had constitutional rights that would protect him and his consulting business.

"You'd better cooperate and start helping your own country for a change", the head agent informed him. "You will get back into your car and follow us to exit 15A, from there you will follow us to a motel where we will question you."

Phil was not sure if he had the right to refuse or ask for a lawyer, but decided he might as well go along with them. Hopefully he would get the questioning over with quickly and be able to go on his way.

"Okay, I'm going to follow you", Phil said.

The agents escorted Phil back to his car and closed the door behind him as he climbed into the car. There were two plain cars, one in front of him and one behind him. The lead car drove along the shoulder until it picked up the speed to enter the traffic flow, Phil followed as did the third car, they did not use their lights.

This got Phil into the espionage business, trying to steal documents from the companies that he visits at any opportunity. He is also told to ask questions to his business contacts, per the instructions of the agents.

"The first thing you're going to have to do is move to the Midwest", the tall second in command agent told him.

NIRVANA

"I stand out like a sewer whale and still receive your kiss, how can I measure up to anyone else after such a love as this, who are you, who are you, tell me who are you, I really want to know who are you", the Who.

On the radio in the background the Talking Heads sang, "take me to the river, drop me in the water, push me in the river ... wash me... taking me down". Phil listened to it and thought about being washed clean.

"You're just out for yourself", Vaughn said to Phil.

Phil didn't disagree, but he didn't think he was any worse in this respect than the average guy.

"Yeah, you're right", Phil responded, "I'm just like everyone else out there, most people just don't seem to know or admit that they're the same way. The human being is desperately selfish whether it knows it or not. Every thing we do is directly or indirectly ultimately a selfish act, even when we think we're at our most generous his imagination had said about humans.

"At the Republican convention Mrs. Quayle said that something like 'not everyone protested in the sixties', implying that those who did were wrong. Well tell Mrs. Quayle that I was only 13 then, but I did and I darn sure ain't apologizing for it. Later, regarding Hillary Clinton, she said that being criticized means your being taken seriously. Can you figure this one out.

"I don't want to compare you to Nero fiddling while Rome burned", said Sharon, "but that's exactly what you're doing to your family, by the way you're living your life."

Disregarding, her, Phil looked out the window at that strange window and thought about what if anything it meant and about the beard he was planning to start growing immediately. Heck, his business was already about down to nothing, how could growing a beard hurt it anymore. "I'm not an expert", Phil said, "I'm just his father."

Sharon chuckled and bit her lip, subconsciously mimicking Phil's underbite. She was a little surprised at Phil's opposition to getting Joey a Ritalin prescription for his so-called attention deficit disorder. "I've got a little personal experience that tells me it's easier to start a prescription than stop one."

He wondered if the true drug lords were those in Columbia or those in the pharmaceutical companies, medical schools and drug stores.

When you play the Indiana lottery, Indiana wins", the lottery commercial said. "That's for sure, because the average Joe or Jane sure doesn't", thought Phil.

"We need to teach our boys and girls not to be criminals and how to try and protect themselves from criminals of all types. The girls might need a little more information on protection than the boys and the boys might need a little more education about keeping their noses clean."

"All the way in, to half out and enunciate your words", Clarence said to Phil. He was instructing Phil about what to do with his fat bottom lip and what to do about his stuttering. Phil was supposed to catch on to the instruction without further explanation, but even though he had had a lot of previous instruction, he did not comprehend. "Welcome to wherever you are", the name of a new INXS album that the DJ just mentioned, was what he was thinking about.

"You should take the high road and not get high", Phil told Joey, "then you'll have the option to be a secret agent."

At his tender young age, Joey still sometimes fantasized about being a James Bond type secret agent. "If you take the low road and use the crutch of drugs, you'll fail their test and you'll have to do something else." Phil was thinking about his consulting work which was certainly a type of spying in his opinion. Unfortunately he was doing it for the economic enemy.

Joey was very curious about what Phil was up to all the time and Phil saw this as a good way for the boy to find out things for himself, instead of being told. The biggie was one area, where he'd as soon the kids found out about for themselves.

"You practice sleuthing all the time, that along with being smart is how you get to be a James Bond, or Sherlock Holmes. Just don't snoop around too much, especially around my desk", Phil gave Joey a clue and a warning.

Lithium ended and the DJ announced a test of the emergency broadcast system. "Darn that noise", Phil said as he turned the radio down lower and lower, until the volume was zero and he couldn't hear a thing.

"I hate that noise", Phil said about the loud piercing tone.

"Yeah, but it could save your life", Joey shouted.

"I'll get rid of you totally", Phil said flipping the switch from radio to tape and totally eliminating the station's signal. A flashing feeling of relief went through his head, combating the mild headache he was having that morning.

It seemed for a second that turning the radio off eliminated the irritating emergency network tone better than just turning the volume to zero, but a few seconds later it seemed that he had been wrong, his head ached as much as before.

"Situational ethics", Vaughn had said and Phil felt accused.

"Hey, I'm a science fiction writer", Phil said defensively, "I just happen to be writing them for Japanese companies at the moment. Believe me, their success is not due to my reports."

"I know my baby if I see her in the dark, I say I know my rider, if I see her in the dark...ain't had no loving, not since you know when...", Traveling Riverside Blues.

"Your friendship with Jack is mostly junky related", Sharon reprimanded him. "It's obvious."

"You have nothing to base that on", he shot back.

"Oh I have a number of things to base it on", Sharon said assertively, "for one, you're over there to see him a lot more when you don't have it than when you do."

"Sharon was mad that he had drawn a picture of the tree during work hours, not to mention how she felt about the picture itself.

It was the one of the cross and the pentagram.

"If you didn't smoke, you wouldn't be seeing symbolism in the branches of the trees outside your office window", she said angrily.

"Hey, I stare out that window every day, it's only logical that I notice unusual trees", Phil said in his defense.

"It's only logical, because you spend hours staring out the window and you're wasted when you do it", Sharon struck back.

Phil made one more attempt to redeem himself, "I don't spend hours looking out the window." He couldn't dispute her other accusations.

"It is symbolic though", he told her, "I see that it's telling me that I have a choice, between the cross and the pentagram. It also makes me think that the two exist together in constant battle, that's why they are both represented by huge twisted limbs. It also reminds me of ying and yang which means something similar. And it tells me that I therefore shouldn't accuse the religions and ways of other people to be Satan inspired, unless I really know my shit, which I don't. Your moral majority friends can answer that one for themselves."

In the background on the radio, Summer Song by Steve Satriani was one of the songs playing.

"There you go again", Sharon critiqued, "blaming the Christians for everything."

"I'm not criticizing them, I'm just saying that they have not done as much for the world as they claim they have. They have failed to live in peace, instead always taking the militant side of the Bible's message, instead of the peaceful message of Christ. They and the U.S. are still number one in my book, but even the number one country and the number one organized religion deserves criticism, only the God that inspired them deserves no criticism, but not them."

Good can exist without evil, but evil can't exist without good, because it needs something to prey on. Just like the tree's branches outside Phil's window. If you took away the cross the image of the pentagram disappeared, because it needed the branches that looked like a cross, otherwise it only was branches that looked like nothing. On the other hand, if you took away those branches that formed half of the pentagram, the cross was there clearer than ever. Upon further inspection, he noticed that without the cross, what was left of the pentagram image looked like an upside down man.

The old worn out road atlas came in handy one more time. Phil rolled it up and set it up between two of the bricks that he had removed from the garden border. It would help his one more time before being recycled, it would wack one of the pushy yellow jackets before they could sting Phil or at least drive him to distraction. These two were the large variety, they were also aggressive and smart. Though he had tried, he hadn't been able to smash them with the shovel as they pestered his ankles, they were too clever.

Another clever troublemaker was the poison ivy plant that had been causing him to itch and break out all over. He was able to get most of it out, but he figured it would defeat his efforts to rid the flower bed of it all together. For one thing its main root started somewhere behind the heavy front steps. The solid cement steps had settled at a different rate than the house, leaving a crack between it and the foundation. A perfect place for the nuisance plant to make its lair. The rogue vine would be impossible to remove unless Phil somehow moved the 300 pound cement steps to get at the poison ivy's tap root.

With all the talk about other AIDS type viruses and even talk that it's not caused by the HIV virus, Phil proposed a theory. He called the disease environmental rotting guilty conscience disease, the rest is. It had to do with a higher than ever toxin content in the environment, a higher level of guilt and possibly a higher level of "sin" than ever before. Everyone is susceptible to it, especially in these last days.

"I'd rather be safe than sorry", Phil said.

"You're sorry enough as it is", Vaughn spat at him.

"Amen, brother", Phil meekly replied.

Everyone wants to rule the world, a good song by Tears for Fears was on as Phil scanned the radio's airways and Phil tuned it in on the dial. This was a radio station that didn't want to be near Phil and instead of moving the antennae close to his body as he did with his usual station, he had to move the antennae as far away from him as possible for good reception. No wonder, it was a light rock station and his electrical field was generally not comfortable with the music they played.

"If you really want the notebook computer, you'll just have to work harder to earn enough money to buy it", Sharon said with her conventional salt of the earth wisdom.

"There you go again, telling me to work harder", Phil protested. "I'll just wait till the price comes down like printers have, instead of getting deeper into the rat race".

He was thinking of all the people he had seen as he walked along the road watching the drivers. Most of them looked harried, their faces scrunched up like racing car drivers. They were in most cases looking at the road or in the rearview mirror. About one in ten was looking at him.

I'm not really trying to reach what you call Nirvana, I'm just trying to get this machine to run on all eight cylinders. I'd rather do it naturally, but I'll settle for whatever it takes to reach the level of confidence that most people seem to reach without any help. At least till they get old, poor, scared or in some other way devastated. Pink Floyd's "Run" was playing in the background.

"Do you or don't you think the Bible's the complete and absolute word of God", Vaughn wanted to know.

"I think that maybe it is and maybe it isn't", Phil replied, a little irritated at the inquisition.

"That's no answer!", Vaughn retorted angrily, "either you do or you don't, what is it!"

"It's none of your fucking business, and at the moment, that is my answer, because I don't know, I'm not convinced either way and at the moment I don't care to blindly believe either side."

"You live for love and want to be beautiful and surrounded by beautiful things, that's why man has always had to work his fingers to the bone. It's not the basic necessities that have been so hard to get, it's been all the things that you want to adorn yourselves and your walls with. And since you have the kids, we've been the ones that have had to go out into the world and take care of business, so you can have those things. We have to do the dirty work, so we can keep you halfway happy, since that's what you've convinced us is good and right. You girls have your own daredevil system, the young girls dare each other to have sex, by always asking if they're having it yet. Boys just lie to each other about it, girls who knows. Boys also have to dare each other to do things that will endear them to the girls who are watching them and reporting through their grapevine, who is cool, who is cute and whose a dork. The boys are not analyzing it the same way and just want to know who is cute, who will do it and what do you have to do to get her to do it with you.

"You are the Sirens, we are the argonauts", he finished defiantly.

"I'm crazy for living with you and you're an idiot", Sharon replied, her toes curled up with anger.

Just then Vaughn burst in, "are you doing anything illegal here?", he queried Phil.

"What do you mean", Phil answered defensively.

"Based on good information, I have a feeling that you're doing some things you shouldn't be doing."

"What the heck kind of question is that, Vaughn. I've known you a long time, but obviously I don't know you as well as you seem to know me."

"Just answer the question, I want to know", Vaughn persisted.

"You have no right to come into my office and accuse me of some un-named crime, there's the door, use it and don't come back!", Phil was nearly livid.

Back at the house Phil and Sharon clashed after discussing how their votes for president were going to cancel each others out.

"Hey, I probably wouldn't have voted to give women the vote and...", Phil was saying when Sharon interrupted.

"Now that women voters outnumber and vote in higher numbers than men and vote for women or men that follow their dictates, I won't voluntarily follow their rules. I won't voluntarily be controlled by sisters, moms and grandmas anymore than by the good old boys, the Russians or anyone else that wants to rule me for their sake or mine."

"Well there's nothing you can do about it so you'd better move your ass over", Sharon said, "cause one way or another, you will do what the majority tells you."

"I'm tired of being just another of your exercise machines", Phil complained dishonestly. He went on trying to lay the basis for his case, "but I'll be happy to just be that or your gardner or whatever role you want me to play in the family, since you don't want me to live here anymore." In the background the old song There Is A Rose In Spanish Harlem played on the oldies station, "I'm gonna pick that rose and watch her as she grows, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la."

Phil's confusing argument didn't sway Sharon, she continued to vent her justifiable anger. She was on a different wavelength, and as EC said, "tigers crouched in jungles in her dark eyes".

There are somethings I shouldn't tell you for our own good, maybe in a few months or years we can talk about it more, but for now you're better off not knowing. If the boy figured it out, fine, if not even better.

Phil walked outside and mosied into his rickety garage. "I think I came out here for some fresh air", he said to himself. But he knew there was some other reason too, he just couldn't think of it at the moment. Was it to water the bushes or scope out which bush he would transplant next, or was it Clarence.

In the background Tommy James and the Shondells song Crystal Blue Persuasion was playing. Love is the answer it said as Phil and his friend walked and talked.

Love and marriage is the best way to raise kids", his imagination told Phil, but you can't legislate it.

"Is PBR's liberal bent any worse than CBN's conservative one", Phil asked his imagination.

"I don't know if I'm a Christian", Phil said to the evangelist, "if you ask me your test question, I'll probably fail, but if you ask me if I want to be a follower of Christ the answer's yes."

"That's all very nice and happy and new age", Vaughn replied, "but you can't sit on the fence, if you can answer yes that you'd go to heaven if you died right now because of your belief in Jesus than you're a Christian, if not you aren't."

"I don't understand and am skeptical of your tongues and faith healing but have no problem with you practicing them, so do your own thing and stop being my judge, have mercy on me and I'll have it on you. Otherwise we'll be butting heads forever, just as all opposing types of people always have. Believing that such problems will always exist without supernatural intervention might be one thing you and I agree on."

"I doubt it", Vaughn replied coolly, "you and I probably only agree on that in the most general way."

"You may or may not be able to extend your life through healthy living, but you definately can shorten it through your stupidity or candor", Clarence said.

"And as a "forignor" you can win friends and influence people only if you first prove your worthiness as a loyal and trustworthy friend. Those that are already accepted into society by accident of birth have this already because they are not subject to preconceived prejudices by the majority party."

Phil put his pointer finger on his crooked bottom tooth and slowly applied pressure to try to pull it into alignment. His ears popped and it seemed like he could breath and hear a little better. This was like getting braces, but cheaper and probably slower. He expected that if he did it enough, it would eventually straighten out the crooked tooth and in the process help align his jaw to help open his sinuses and estacheon tubes. Upon examining his teeth in the mirror, he noticed no improvement, but he was certain that he felt a small improvement each time he performed this excersise. Therefore he figured that it was doing some good, even if the visual correction was too small for him to detect each time. The trick was to hang on to that small improvement and build on it. This would be easier if he wasn't under constant attack of the accusers and defenders of the status quo. These aggressive cynics, saw anyone different as a threat and had the support of the establishment, which was as always quick to cry blasphemy at anyone who didn't observe their ritual superstitions.

"That was back in the days when people knew who their fathers were and you could still tell the difference between a robot and a person.

"I'm not convinced that the Bible is totally the inspired word of God, or that life is just bootcamp for heaven or that GOP is basically the same as GOD. Why should I support a

"Another pleasant valley Sunday, here in status symbol land", the Monkees.

He got off the phone with Jack after hearing the disappointing news. Jack still hadn't connected and he had nothing at all to smoke at the office except perhaps three or four hits of rendered and re-rendered resin and crud.

Phil was depressed and stopped at the fast food drive through for a breakfast biscuit, hash browns and a cinamon raisin biscuit.

Once he arrived at the office, it took only a few minutes to smoke the pitiful shit he had left in the film container.

Finishing up, he wondered should he call Andy. Andy was the only other person he could think of to call since Jack and Cal were both dry. He hated to, since Andy would probably already thought that old Phil only called when he needed to mooch a buzz.

He wished he hadn't thrown out the two pipes he had found in his rental apartment after the last renter, an apparent small time dealer had moved out. "Maybe I'll check the garage one more time and go through those tool boxes he left", Phil considered.

On impulse, Phil spun his chair slowly around and looked in his file drawer where he kept his stash. Maybe he had overlooked something in there and with a little luck he might find a couple of stems in the corner of the drawer or something.

He kept a number of files in the drawer, things like leases from the renters that he'd had over the past three years and he hoped that some tiny smokeable scrap had slipped under them. Moving the files to one side and then to the other of the drawer, he scrounged despairingly, not really very hopeful that his search would pay off.

"Thank you God!", Phil said to himself as he picked up the carefully twisted up coffee filter. His scrounging had paid off as he had found a tiny parcel of dried out bong scrappings that he had tucked away several weeks ago. He instantly wondered if he should be thanking God for this or if it would be better to keep God out of such things.

Now he was inspired and remembered that there was another coffee filter in the garbage. He had used it to filter the bong water yesterday, maybe he could scrap a few more grains of bong crud off it. He scrounged again and was moderately rewarded, but not like he had been by the filter in the drawer. It conceivably had enough in it for him to smoke all day and hopefully by then Jack would come through.

"Another trend related to the downloaders", Clarence told Phil, "was people cloning and raising themselves as children."

"Would they download their own memories into the children they created and raised?", Phil queried.

"Sometimes they would and sometimes they wouldn't", Clarence answered. "First they would clone themselves and then they'd raise themselves from infancy to adulthood. It's another way of trying to keep themselves immortal, since many of them foolishly aspire to that."

"Sounds pretty strange", Phil said, crinkling his eyebrows in a display of disbelief.

"Well, they think that they can do a better job than their parents did with them", Phil's imagination continued.

"Imagine that, your whole life on a single crystal plastic laser CD", Phil said to himself.

Speak of the devil the radio said.

"I'm for Clinton, because I don't think he could do any worse than Bush and even if he does I don't care, let's get it over with if that's what it's coming to", Phil said meaning armageddon.

"Sunday morning I sometimes feel differently but right now I question every churches authority to tell me how I should live. I don't question Gods though and I fear him because I know he is just, which to a sinner like me seems cruel. I don't think Jesus is coming back in any shape or form but I pray that if he does, he will be as merciful as he was last time. As for who he is, I don't know, and I no longer accept him as in some way or other the Son of God or the one who I must pray will be my savior, I have too many questions about his nature, resurrection etc. I would like to ask him a lot of questions about hell and heaven and moslems for instance, so despite the pain it is causing me, I must question his authority.

"I wonder if you're really right about all this stuff you say God has told you. Are you really as sure as you say you are that you know all the answers, or are you just hoping you're right, so you can have "crowns" and be able to keep saying I told you so. I can't help but think what I think since such questions have already been in people's minds. You haven't convinced me otherwise yet, and until you practice some of the mercy you preach, you never will. All you've done is judge me and if you get the power to, you'll no doubt carry out my sentence.

"What gives you the right to say that this and that is God "moving" or God's will. It seems more to me that when things are going your way, you call it God moving and when things are going against you or for your adversary, you call it the devil. Seems like you pretty much call it the way you want it, your pious protestations notwithstanding.

"All people want to be in control of their own lives", Clarence said. "The way to do this, often is to be in control of someone else's life, like a spouse, employee or slave."

"This obviously creates problems, unless the other person is extremely passive, in which case it still creates a problem, in the form of resentment."

"Men have been the victors, on the basis of several attributes that they generally possess more so than women. But women have been battling it out with men for control since the garden of Eden."

"Men have fought back for all these millennia, with their wits and other weapons, women have done likewise. The result has been the macho society, where men have made use of their violent tendencies against women, for women and against other societies or elements in their society. The result is the "system", "establishment", "status-quo" or whatever else you want to call it. These allow a roughly symbiotic relationship between men and women and lower classes of people. A hierarchy, pecking order or whatever with the dominant man usually on the top, being henpecked to do more by the dominant woman. The means to carry this out is the classes they both dominate. The lower classes tolerate this barely or completely, depending on what negative or positive incentives are in it for them. Variations of this system include democracies, communism, religions, cults, tribal systems and the rest of human societies that are trying to control their destinies and reduce the effects of entropy or chaos.

"I'm not going to trade the good old boys running things for the good old girls or the good old anybody telling me what to do", Phil protested. "I don't care who they think they are, no one's going to tell me they're created any differently than anyone else. The only way any of them are going to get me to do things their way is by them coercing me, like they're already doing. If Jesus comes in a cloud from the sky and if I'm lucky enough to see it, I'll bow to him and pray for mercy. I won't bow and pray for mercy to anyone else, not willingly anyway." This you say will be too late and I hope you're wrong.

His imagination was indeed old, Phil hadn't asked him exactly how old, but he was going to today.

They were reading the morning devotions and Phil was reading a part in the world of the man who had wrote the devotion book. Paraphrased, it said that before the fall of Adam and Eve, there were no thorns or thistles on any branches and that lions and tigers did not harm other animals to get meat.

"That's fine if you ignore the fossil record", he muttered as he read on. Sharon, Joey and Sally listened to the devotion. Phil wasn't going to say anymore about the bit on thistles and tigers, but as it would happen, the author had included two questions about that in the study section. Because the author was so insistent about teaching that evolution is bunk and that God suddenly made thorns grow and tigers bite. "I'm not saying that he couldn't do that", Phil said to Sharon, "but I don't believe that he necessarily did it that way."

Sharon shot him a look of dismay, she considered his talk borderline blasphemy. Heck a few hundred years ago you could be burned at the stake for talking like that. In her neck of the woods it hadn't changed, you could still get killed for talking this way.

Phil saw her expression and reacted. "Hey, that's how I feel and I've got no problem with it."

It was kind of like the discussion on who to vote for with some people the other day, including Vaughn, if you weren't going to vote for their candidate, you were crazy and they tried to put an incredible shame and guilt trip on you.

"If you've got a problem with it that's your problem", he went on.

Sharon was kind, she didn't say anything else about it, unlike Vaughn and the boys who wanted to make their problem, Phil's problems too.

"If you ignore the fossil record", said Joey mischevously. Phil didn't know what the boy thought about all this talk. He was probably the only one out of the three siblings, to know what mom and dad were talking about.

"I'll put up with you for as long as you put up with me", Phil said, "at least I think I will."

They both required some putting up with and Phil was fairly determined that he should put up with her shortcomings for the good of the kids number one and for their own good number two.

"I'm already gone...", the Eagles song said, but to Phil it had a completely different interpretation.

"To me it means I'm already gonna die prematurely anyway, from lung cancer, heart disease, murder or whatever, so I might as well live life to the fullest as long as I don't directly, or directly indirectly hurt anyone else. Applied to women he'd be a carouser if he went by his natural instincts. He believed that this would be hurting his wife and kids, so he restrained himself as much as he could.

"That's not very smart and it's a terrible example to teach the kids", Sharon said, her feelings hurt by Phil's explanation of already gone.

"I'm not trying to set that as an example, that's just a personal thing because of my situation, everyone has to make their own decisions and I admit that one is wrong. What isn't wrong is that you should make your own decision, fight for what is right, which means in self defense only and not for every crackpot job producing war that the governments come up with. And not be led by others into such madness, because they are the same ones that will lock you away with the rapists and murderers if you don't tow their line. All you scared men are like the churchman of pre WWII who said he didn't protest because he wasn't a Jew - when they came for the Jews, didn't protest when they came for the gays, cause he wasn't a Gay etc. and then finally there was no one left to protest on his behalf when they came for him. You're letting the voices of everything but reason and justice lead you into being the pawns of history as usual. The brief moments of triumph like the declaration of independence, constitution and bill of rights have been turned into Washington DC propaganda slogans by McCarthyism and Madison Avenue types, not James Madison and Thomas Jefferson types.

"I'm different", said Phil. "I'm half you know what and I have a different view of the world than you. I believe less in your ideals like conspicuous consumption and love it or leave it than you do, they didn't succeed in brainwashing me as much as they did with you, but of course you just call me satanic because I don't see things your way."

"You're crazy, that's what I call you and maybe the devil is in you, I don't know and probably wouldn't care except for the kids", was her reply.

"I care about conservation and all that other stuff as much as you, you just use it as an excuse to cover up all the lies and evil you perpetuate", she went on.

"That may be", Phil lamented, "but I hope you're wrong." He continued to file the spoon's edge smooth and then returned it to the drawer.

Sharon wanted to buy another one, "I won't use that spoon."

"You may not be able to make enough money to give these kids a decent standard of living, but I can."

"There's no doubt, the battle lines are being drawn, liberal versus conservative, both calling themselves the party of God, however they define it, I'm fighting for neither of them, but only in self defense. And I don't believe I've got much more than a snowballs chance in hell."

"Your sunday school classes have the atmosphere of political rallies and your political caucuses rock with religious fervor and rhetoric, it's all the same, we're all playing the blame game."

"Well you make it sound like you're a victim, but you're the victimizer", Sharon rebutted.

"My generation is hopeless", Phil said. "The best hope is today's younger generation, not all of them have been captured by the establishment of the world. My generation has laid down in bed with the whore of Babylon. We have grown fat, lazy, complacent and have become the enemy. The idealism of the 60's has been abandoned for democratic or republicanism, we have embraced the old status quo because it has promised us our own little acre of paradise if we'll follow like sheep and not question authorities ranging from the morals of the church to the morals of the president.

"I'm doing a survey to see who's the most self-righteous of all the religions", Phil told Vaughn.

"One related thing I've noticed is that everyone's lining up according to party lines. Battle lines are being drawn for religion wars, to go along with the constant battle of the sexes and the race war, which both fester constantly. I'd like to say that I'm staying out of it, but it's hard not to try to find a group to identify and find strength in numbers. Unfortunately, I'm one of those people that doesn't fit into any group. I'm still in my very weak self defense mode, which means me against the world. I don't like the current good old boy, patriarchal power structure because it oppresses everyone. But I'm not willing to trade it for a matriarchal society or anything else, I'm holding out for nothing archal society, in which a man or woman of any color can do what he wants unless he lays hands on another. Someone said give peace a chance, don't tread on me, Extreme, said it most recently.

When she found out about Phil's cigarette butt collection and his standing on the corner panhandling with a homeless but not hopeless sign, Sharon made up her mind that he had gone completely mad.

For his part, Phil hadn't wanted her to know about that or the pain in his chest, but both secrets had been loosed.

At the end of the book, Phil learns that his imagination is just that and not an angel.

"Okay, if you want a label, I am a unitarian-Christian, raised as a unitarian, with it's baggage and it's freedom, who wants to be saved , who's freedom is greater than any other, how's that, are you satisfied now!", Phil debated with him friend.

"No, no, that's no good", Vaughn rebutted, "you can't have it both ways, choose one or the other, you can't be a unitarian and a Christian. They're diametrically opposed to each other.

"That's your opinion, maybe they're not as different as you think", Phil lashed out.

"That's God's opinion", Vaughn lashed back. " Stop sitting on the fence and make up your mind."

"Maybe someday I will, but for now I'll take my chances with where I am, you can be my judge, jury and executioner if you want, after all that's what organized religion always has been. I'll take my chances with the God of the Bible myself, if he turns out to be exactly what you say then I'm probably in grave danger, but I'll pray for his mercy and his favor not for yours."

"There's no other way to intrepet the Bible, either Jesus was everything he said he was or none of it", Vaughn warned, "you've got to decide if you believe it or if you don't and if you're for him or against him and live accordingly."

"Well you know that I don't live accordingly, but I doubt you do either. I think I am as much for him as you are, but only God knows my heart, not you and not me. An as for deciding if I believe it all or not and what the Bible means, I can think of other explanations others than yours and you're not going to make your's the law if I can help it."

"You'll be sorry", Vaughn said, as he thought about the hit squad idea he had heard.0

"You want a revolution! Don't you?", Vaughn accused Phil.

"Yeah a peaceful revolution, it such a thing is possible", Phil slobered, looking up from his beer.

"That elderly neighbor lady, sure seems suspicious of me", Phil approached Sharon, "you haven't been feeding her information have you."

"All her subtle inuendos alluding to prohibition, revenue agents, new windows in garages and stuff, if I didn't know better, I'd think she suspects me of something."

"You guys want the right to privacy and non-invasion to be valid as long as their isn't some emergency reason to violate this and you want to be the ones to define the emergency. I'd like to know if there was a fight between those of your ilk and those opposed when the constitution and Bill of Rights were proposed", Phil continued his argument. Just keep hanging out at your stonehenges and pyramids and saying that you are speaking for God, he'll come for you as surely as he'll come for anyone else.

"It's either true or it's not", said Phil, "I don't know and I don't accept your choice as being "the" choice and law over me."

The deal for the mexican had not gone down and Phil was desperate. He had no money and his lungs were aching, he wondered if this was the end of the line. Did he have lung cancer, if so, then all this was a mistake, all he had been arguing for was wrong.

He also was broke, he wanted smoke badly, but he knew he couldn't afford any at the moment. He had one bowl of domestic left and planned on surviving for three or four days off of half a cigar he had found in Chicago last week. He would bong it, "if", that is "when" the cravings started getting to him to put some tar in his lungs.

Upon a little reflection, he was glad the shit was illegal. If he could go around smoking cigars of it, he would have been dead of cancer or heart disease years ago. Being illegal, it was too expensive and too risky to do that. The counter argument he could think of to that, was that there were thousands of men and women rotting in jail because it was illegal.

He was being selfish as usual, but really he still wished it were not illegal, so he could make the choice himself about ruining his life. It was pretty apparent at this point that he had done himself in by the choices he'd made. He wouldn't be seeing the kids growing up and the younger ones wouldn't even remember him. From his point of view that was one of the big downers of it all, that and the fact that he wouldn't be around to try and help raise them. On the other hand, he was grateful that he had at least been able to be around them for the years they did have together. Sharon was still pretty and no doubt could find a good new husband out there who would support and raise the kids at least as well as Phil would have.

"I'm an addict and a criminal", Phil wrote to the kids.

He wished that one way or another it wasn't that way, but in this world that's the way it is. He just wanted them to know that if they were smart they'd avoid the pit he had fallen into. Outside it was rainy and gloomy, the

"I'll definitely advise you to avoid those mistakes, but I'll also advise you to throw away the tight schedule that you keep. Don't let the world run you like a rat through a maze.

Phil cupped his left ear with both hands and it seemed he could hear better from it. Then he tried cupping a hand to each ear and noticed an even greater improvement and somewhat different type of improvement. It seemed logical to him, after all he was increasing the sound-gathering outer ear surface by about five times. "

"That's ridiculous", Jack told him.

Phil's definition of an office was a place to hang out and hopefully make a little money. A job was something you do to make Enough to pay the bills. He like being self employed, because the office was his and he wasn't someone elses employee.

Phil called the brokerage house and through the automated phone system accessed his company money market account balance. "As of November 16th, your WPMA account balance is \$11,638...your purchasing power is \$11,628", the robotic voice informed him.

"What do you do when the same country is both protecting you and oppresing you", Phil asked. "You try to improve it without destroying it", Clarence said.

"Everytime you criticize and attack me, you are judging me, which as you may guess, I don't appreciate. Take care of the man in you mirror and the mote in your eye before you decide to accuse me of this or that."

"The only time I've ever flipped out on you", Phil told Sharon, "was the day you were screaming at me and grabbed me by the throat while I was sitting in my recliner. I got up and slapped you one time. Other then that I've never flipped out on you or tried to hurt you or be mean."

"You hurt me and the kids every minute of the day because of the way you live", she retaliated.

She believed her anger at his was rightful, he believed it was not. As a good, conscience mother she would do anything at all to get what she felt was best for her kids. Anybody who got in her path had better look out, especially in this day and age when a woman is able to ruin her husband in stead of the old fashioned way, which was just the opposite.

Phil didn't think that Sharon necessarily knew what was best for everybody and he wasn't going to give up without a fight, destroy him though she might. He felt strongly that he might be right and her and her ways wrong. She felt even more strongly that she and her values were the right ones and this gave her the impetus to be so bluntfully willing to bully and dominate. She didn't see it as bullying, though and believed that she was unmistakeably doing God's will and darn Phil if he reisted here will, which was the will of her Protestant forefathers and foreothers. The same iron will that had virtually conquered the world.

And she wondered why he hadn't made a move on her in weeks, why was he so cold, why was he taking care of it himself, with Rosie as Jackson Browne put it. She assured him that she knew exactly what he was up to and how he was being selfish and unfair to her again. "What am I supposed to do?", she yelled at him, refering to her own need for sex. "What am I repulsive to you?"

The argugment ended abruptly upon Joey's loud and tearful pleas for mommy and daddy to stop fighting. He was going to tell her that it was hard to want sex from her for several weeks after an outbreak of one of her attacks on him. He don't know how she was wired, but his wiring made her not repulsive but definately unattractive to him for a long time after each time she raked him over the coals. It was a violation, though she didn't know it or maybe just didn't care. Her attempts to control those in her universe where undying and in his opinion perverse. But that was what made the world go around in her circle, men running the world on behalf of themselves and their matriarchs. As long as they and everyone else did what they Knew was right, everything was honky dory. If anyone was out of line, as always someone was, they must smash it down in the interest of God, country and the family. As a libertarian, Phil was squarely in their sights and all tyrants sights.

The only way out thought Phil in his stubbornness was to call her bluff it it was one. He would have to demand that she hold absolutely no sway over him, which she could never acceopt without putting him through hell. It was the nature of both of them not to give in, so their battle of the sexes would not end in a truce anytime soon.

She had the advantage more then women had ever had it. They had superior numbers and they had most men on their side because their way was the best way for the status quo minded people who had already made their's and know wanted to preserve it for "posterity".

And it was all tied in to their relgion and to the religion of any dominate group. To be rebell against them was according to them to rebell against God and once they had made this judgement you were scum

and must be destroyed. This had worked against every imaginable enemy over the millenium, since if you didn't think and worship to the powerful groups pleasure, they'd make you bend you knee the way they wanted you to. In Phil's case the local Protestant churches were what Sharon and her powerful attended and demanded that the kids attend, claimed they had the inside track with God.

"It shouldn't be any more illegal to smoke it, then it is to smoke or drink anything else.

He couldn't get a clear answer or agreement from different churches on what a Christian is and how many of their criteria you had to meet to be one, he didn't call himself one. Unitarians on the other hand made it pretty clear, you follow the dictates of your conscience. He was therefore either a Unitarian Christian or neither and he didn't particularly care what name they called him. After all they were only human judges and could only kill you and your's once. But that might change in the future, if "they" can download and "resurrect" people, then they can torture you as much as the Bible and the Greek myths described people being tormented forever.

"I may or may not be the bastard that you always say I am, but I'll defend till the end my right to be whatever I am", Phil told Vaughn.

"In life, everything we do has consequence", said his imagination, "and unlike in physics, it's not always an equal and opposite reaction' type consequence". "In fact", Vaughn the "angel" as he called himself went on, "it's usually a lot more complicated than in the physical world."

"In the physical world, you get what you ask for, be it with smashing atoms or smashing funny bones. But in dealing with people's lives, the consequences are always complicated by monkey wrenches that we can't see or anticipate."

In the background a cash register dinged, "is that another angel getting it's wings?", Phil asked.

Phil inhaled the cigarettes smoke through his nose and then also exhaled the smoke through his nose, after holding for only a second or two. He had recently read that the lungs were damaged more when smoke was held in the lungs for a longer time. He was trying to conserve however, so he took one last drag and then held it in for about ten seconds. He did this because he figured the smoke would saturate his lungs more and raise the level of it's active ingredient in his bloodstream, making his work for the day less of a drag. Phil did this in spite of what he had read in the article that quoted a real expert as saying holding it in didn't raise the level of active ingredient in the blood. Phil believed what the expert had stated, but he held it in anyway, following his own wrong logic despite knowing better.

The insurance company's forensic scientist examined the tar that they had extracted from the cadavers lungs and tested it. "It test's positive", he told Ralph.

"Great", the insurance executive said excitedly. "Now we have a scientific method of getting out of paying claims from pot smokers."

The scientist shook his head, "yes, there's no way they can deny that they lied on the application about using drugs, when they see this test."

Ralph laughed, "yeah and since we'll have proved that they lied, we'll be released from the obligation of paying them a death claim. At the most we might have to return their premiums, but that's a lot less than the face amount of the policy they had."

"Not to mention the precedent this sets", the forensic scientist piped in. Both men were proud of their discovery and at least one of them was thinking about how he could parlay the coup into a big promotion.

"I believe that he was at the very least the greatest human who ever lived and more likely he is the risen son of God, who is coming back to save his flock. I wish I could say I believe the second part all the time, but I have many days when doubt enters my mind. I've never seen any visions or miracles except ordinary every day, run of the mill ones, so I'm still a bit of a doubting Thomas, even though I often wish I weren't", Phil said.

"Well", the forensic scientist said, "I don't know why you believe any of that, after all there's no scientific proof of any of it."

"Yeah, it might be", Sharon answered, "but you're fooling yourself if you say you're doing for my benefit, you're really doing it for our own self interest."

"Just like saying you smoke because you enjoy it, you know as well as me that you're addicted to the shit", Sharon broadened the discussion.

"Well I'll admit it", Phil replied in a low key manner.

"I admit I'm addicted to it and that so far I haven't been able to kick the habit."

Sharon eyed him suspiciously, "you have to want to first."

"I know", Phil said. "I know". Inside he knew that he wanted to quit on one hand and that on the other hand he didn't. Unless he ever decided that he really wanted to quit, he'd always be at the mercy of the vile chemicals that were rotting out his lungs, heart and probably his brain.

"Sharon", Phil said to his wife. "I know you think I'm basically a slob, an idiot, a weakling and who knows what else. Well I just want to say that your opinion of me is a reflection of what you think about yourself. If you had more respect for yourself, you would think that you're worthy of a good man and you'd see us both in a better light."

Every guy I know would like to be MVP, that's a driving force in just about everything we do. Is it any wonder that some people think in terms of the MVP of the world, which depending on your perspective would be Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, or others.

"You place too many expectations on these kids", Phil told her. "You're going to drive them nuts."

"I don't think I have too many expectations", she defended. "I'm trying to balance it so that I place the right expectations on them that will help raise them to be happy, well adjusted and able to provide for themselves and their kids. I just want to protect their bodies and their minds. In case you didn't know, it's not such an easy job."

"I know", Phil said. "I know." He was thinking about his role in all this and that he was not doing the type of job he could and should do to help raise the kids right.

"They didn't really teach this stuff in school did they?", Phil said.

"That's right, but God did put it in the Bible", she educated him.

"The same thing that makes you live can kill you in the end", said Neil Young in one of his songs. "I think I can forgive someone of just about anything as long as they haven't inflicted physical ill on anyone. Once they cross that line, It's hard to forgive them in any measure greater then the their victims chances of recovery. Being a selfish human, I would probably forgive more or less depending on how personal their crime is", Phil finished up.

"I don't think that's very Christian", Vaughn and Sharon both said at once.

"We're all gonna be dead some day, maybe sooner then we'd like to be and maybe latter", he said.

"The most disgusting thing about you is that all your so called friendships are based on that disgusting habit of yours", she said. "Just look at it, Jack, Ron, Bob and that disgusting Clarence guy. That's the only thing you guys have in commone and you just use each other when it's convenient, so that you can get loaded up with it."

"Well it's not like you can just go to the corner store and buy it like a pack of cigarettes or a six pack of beer. Which I imagine you'd like to outlaw too. I don't know if my friendships are as shallow as you say, but I'm sure that the same thing has happened when cigarettes were recently unavailable in Italy or when booze was outlawed here during prohibition."

Phil went on, "besides you and your goody two shoes crowd operate on the same system of creating obligations and keeping score of them, you're just too darn `superior' to admit it."

make an outline and fill it in, just like a market research report

"Did God tell mother nature, you drive me wild, I'll drive you crazy, is God the male and mother nature the female sides of the universe?", Phil asked Lawrence after hearing the Kiss song on the radio.

"My goodness, you make mother nature sound like a whore and God like a lecherous old man", Lawrence said in dismay.

Suddenly Sally appeared at the top of the stairs, "these are my boobies!", she announced.

"Yes dear, I see", Phil replied a little surprised.

"I can show you my boobies", she went on and then she said something else that Phil couldn't understand.

"What hun?", he said, hoping to get a clearer message from the child.

"I can show them to you", the three and a half year old said, "because I can't reach up real high yet!" She stood at the top of the stairs and stretched real far to show just how far she could reach. In her mind, the fact that she couldn't reach up real high yet, was strongly connected with the fact that showing off her boobies was not taboo yet either.

Then she went on to another topic, "Rebecca and I saw a spider in my room and it tried to get us!"

"Oh my!", said Phil in exaggerated excitement. "What happened to it?"

"Mommy killed it!", the child related happily. "Mommy killed it with one of these things", Sally held up a magazine. "That's nice...", Phil's words were stopped by the little girl's next move.

"Ahhhh!", she screamed in terror as she slipped and started plummeting down the stairs. "Oh-no!", Phil yelled, jumping to his feet and flying towards the spiraling little one intersecting her at the bottom.

"Whaaaaay!", Sally screamed. She was more shaken then hurt.

"You wanted a lap dog, but you got a junkyard dog", Phil said proudly.

"No I wanted a decent husband, but I got a lazy bum", she replied matter of factly, adjusting the apron around her waste.

"Call me a lazy bum if you want to, I'm not claiming to be a saint. I'm just doing my best to be happy, well adjusted and provide for myself and my family. Like you said, it's not such an easy job."

Sharon looked at him and smiled the sweetest smile ever, "yeah, you old blok, none of us are perfect, I guess you are doing the best you can." They embraced and kissed with a new, never before matched passion and intensity.

Sharon was both intelligent and wise, but she still wasn't going to run PHil's life.

He trusted the Pastor's knowledge of the world and hereafter more then the rock and roller's or anyone else's, because the pastor's knew the most about the Bible, which he believed held all the answers. They didn't always apply what they knew about the Bible, but they certainly knew it better then anyone else. He would primarily rely on them for information about whether this or that was new age, was God inside us or outside us or whatever, they would know best.

"The thing about Phil and Sharon is that they'll never really get along until Sharon's about 80. She's so serious that it'll take her that long to mellow out. Phil's been mellow all his life, so until she chills, they'll never get along as well as they should", Jack told Melisa.

Phil appeared at the door of the trading company and asked to see the Japanese person-in-charge. In one hand, Phil held his business card and in the other hand a fifth of rare scotch whiskey, his ticket of admission .

"We're sorry, all of our operators are busy right now", the recorded message said. "No you're busy, right now because all of your operators are sorry", Sharon replied to the robot voice.

As Phil leaned over to remove the screw from the bottom office shelf he was removing, a large wholesale club coffee can full of pliers, screwdrivers and screws slid off it's perch. Down below, Phil had been watching it as he knew his head was exposed to just such an assault.

"Look out Dad", Joey yelled just in time.

Phil's head and hand were already moving to dodge and intercept the can even before it gained terminal head knocking velocity. He caught it between the edge of the shelf and the thin air over his thin haired

head. With a move that looked fairly deft to the boy, Phil caught it and replaced it on the high shelf all in one motion, without losing a single screw.

"Gosh Dad", Joey said a little surprised at his father's quickness. "How did you catch that so fast."

"It was easy", Phil said paternally. "I saw it coming. It's not all the one's you see coming that get you, it's the one that you don't see."

As he spoke he backed out of the right side of the closet and stepped over to the left side. Then with a big effort he slid both of the sliding closet doors to the right. At that moment, the three six foot long shelves that he had early leaned against the sliding doors from inside the closet fell. It was one of those times when there wasn't enough time to react. Boom! They caught Phil solidly on his head knocking him almost to the floor.

Joey gasped and then laughed when he realized his dad was okay. "Famous last words", the boy said.

"Darn you", Phil said angrily before realizing the benign nature of his sons laughter. "I guess I should be wearing a hard hat."

Later that day driving home, Phil was again stopped by officer Olin. He quickly hid the metal cigarette and poured the smoke out of the film canister onto the floor of the car. It was such a small amount that he figured it would be imperceptible to anyone but a dog.

"Can I see your drivers license and auto registration", the sheriffs deputy said with authority.

"Sure", replied Phil cheerfully, it's right here. He opened the glove box and searched for the registration form.

"I thought I smelled something funny", Olin said.

"Well, I was smoking a cigarette", Phil cooperated voluntarily.

"It didn't smell like a cigarette", Olin retorted, knowing full well that he had smelled the other kind of smoke.

"Well I'm sorry, sir, but that's what I was smoking", Phil was insistent but polite.

"Then show it to me, where's what's left of it", the deputy said with growing irritation.

"Ah, I think I dropped it out the window a minute ago", Phil said getting a little more defensive.

The lawman looked around on the ground, "I don't see it", he said. "If you can find it fine, if not, I would like to take a quick look inside your car. Just to satisfy my curiosity."

Phil tried to think of an excuse, "well I'll look, but it was the non filter type, there's probably nothing left, I smoke them down pretty far."

After a minute, Phil gave up, "I don't see it", he said. Phil hoped that his spirit of cooperation would be noted and he excused with a stern warning or the like. He was hoping that the officer would decide not to ask again to search the car, but it was not to be.

"I would like to look inside your car, is that okay with you?", he quizzed Phil.

Phil didn't know which choice to make, make a stink about his rights or cooperate further, figuring that the cop would not find anything. He had been rehearsing a speech in which he said he would not allow a search on the grounds of his principals and the constitution. "I don't want to set a precedent", he thought. "If I let you search my car without a warrant I'm contributing to the breakdown of my own constitutional rights, so I must insist that you get a warrant."

But Phil thought better and decided to grant deputy Olin the right to take a look in his car.

Why are the Japanese the way they are, why are they so hard driving. Are they as devious as our stereotypes tell us they are", Phil asked his imagination.

"Why don't you ask Tanaka", Larence answered. (Larence claims to be Phil's guardian angel, but he's never done anything supernatural, so Phil takes him with a grain of salt.

"He would just ask me if American's are as wicked as they seem to the Japanese", he answered, Phil wanted an unbiased opinion and if Larence really was an angel he should be that.

"Maybe you should be asking a different question", Larence said. "Don't even bother asking if it's so, just ask yourself and Tanaka if it's nature or if it's nurture that causes it."

Tanaka looked at Phil and spoke, "the bubble has burst, our client's do not have the money now to consider researching the U.S. market."

Phil had heard that Japan's bubble economy had "burst" about a hundred times in the last year. At the same time his income had shrunk to less than half of what it had been a couple of years ago. He was starting to think that the bottles of whiskey that he'd given as presents were a waste of money. Now on top of everything else, his Japanese clients were getting slower and slower about paying for his services.

"What do you think about the shellacking we gave old Saddam last night?", Jack asked.

"If it's God's will, like you guys imply then fine, if it isn't then darn you", Phil told his friend.

"Hey we just don't want guys like Saddam and the Japs trying to take over the world", Jake defended himself.

"Yeah, you guys have been running it for hundreds of years and you don't want to give it up do you?", Phil assailed Jake.

"What the hell do you mean you guys?", Jack wondered back. "You're as white as I am."

"Yeah, but I don't think we're the same. I not one of and I don't want to take orders from the good old boys, the old boys, the boys or the ladies, so don't call you and me the same."

"Well you may not be the same, but you're sure no better than me!", Jake said, going on the offensive.

"That's right", said Phil. "No better than you or anyone else, that's right."

"I'm tired of people holding me to a higher standard then they hold themselves. It's the old line don't ask me any questions and I'll tell you no lies", Phil was pissed. "You come over under the guise of helping me move and instead you smoke my stuff and take my furniture for free. I was hoping it would only cost me one or the other to get moved, but I guess you're charging me twice."

Jack was ready for Phil's barrage, "yeah, but according to your obligation theory, think of all the obligation credit you just accrued off of me."

They both laughed, one way or another it would all come out even in the end if they gave it enough time.

"We have all mastered the art of fooling ourselves, it's harder to fool others", the old guy told Phil.

Phil thought to himself, "hmmm? ... hun? no wonder they're called hun".

He had been listening to things seemingly being thrown around and banged around upstairs ten minutes ago, when Sharon seemed to be in a rage against him. But now when she came down the basement to tell Phil she was leaving, she was as cool as a cat. There was no sign that she had had any kind of temper tantrum and Phil started to wonder if it just sounded loud upstairs when one walked around and did housework. That could have been it, maybe his oversensitive mind had just imagined that Sharon was having a tantrum. Either he had imagined the whole thing, or she was acting very strange.

The fax machine was going crazy, orders had been pouring in all day and all night. They were coming in from all over the world and it seemed that Phil and Sharon's financial problems were over, all he had to do was copy the reports and mail them out.

"My prayers have been answered", Sharon remarked excitedly. She had indeed prayed long and hard at church yesterday for some kind of miracle to get them out of the mess Phil had created.

"Yeah, my prayers have been answered too", Phil replied, his eyes almost coming out of his head. He was trying to total the amount of money that had come in and so far it was up to \$96,500.

Phil should have been genuinely thankful for what was happening, but being the kind of guy he was, he had other things on his mind. He was thinking about Raul who he had met at the bar and the conversation they had last month.

"If you ever get your hands on a big chunk of money, I can quadruple it for you overnight", Raul had told him. The wheels were turning in Phil's twisted mind and he had visions of spending his life in the lap of luxury for the rest of his life.

"JUST STAY OUT OF IT", Lawrence said emphatically to Phil.

"The way God runs the world is none of your business, so you'd be smart to keep your mouth shut and just butt out!", Phil was shocked, he'd never seen the purported angel in such a tizzy before.

"Just be satisfied to be an observer in this whole affair and be content to play your own insignificant part, don't forget you're a married man and have responsibilities, it's not like you're a single guy with only yourself to worry about. Write it all down, if you want to, since you think it's therapeutic, but don't do anything else with it, it may not be worth it", Lawrence finished his advice.

Phil had already pretty much decided the same thing, he felt it would be better for everyone involved if he kept his mouth shut. After all, he wasn't sure of any of his ideas, and the groups at each extreme pole had unflinching faith in their own indisputable proof. He had toyed with the idea of watering down anything contrivertial, but it needed to be all or nothing. Taking the therapeutic diary approach, he could write down his unbridled thoughts and have a better chance of keeping them all out of hot water.

"The only way your heart will ever be white is if plaque and cholesterol turn it that way", said Sharon.

"Ugh!", thought Phil, "Attila the hun is back".

"Think I'll take a couple of tylenol for this braintumor", he said as he left the room.

Phil eventually became convinced that Sharon was trying to slowly kill him by feeding him nothing but high cholesterol fatty food. He knew that she was from a family background where such foods were the norm, but he still was extremely suspicious of her and her possible motives.

"Here dear", Sharon said as she put the plate of greasy burgers, fries, macaroni and cheese and green beans on the table in front of him and the kids.

"She's probably thrown in the green beans to disguise what she's doing", Phil thought to himself. He figured that she'd start feeding the kids healthy food after she'd done him in. "Why the hell doesn't she just use arsenic or cyanide and just get it over with quick."

"It is obvious that some members of each race have declared war on each other. It is prudent for the other members of each to work for peace, but not let down their defenses. What has happened in Bosnia and elsewhere show's that there is nothing as vicious and barbaric as ethnic or racial hatred unleashed. Bosnia is also another illustration of the fact that the UN or U.S. or whoever will not be there to save anyone except those who it is in their immediate interest to save. As for my people, we are blamed for most of the evils of the world and those who call us enemy will doubtless grant us no quarter when the shit hits the fan. Whether the threat comes from a different race, religion, nationality, from within or from a combination or whatever", Phil continued.

"Face it", Jack said. "You mean blacks don't you."

"I admit that I personally am very afraid of blacks, but I may be wrong", Phil explained. "We're as likely to be done in by right or left wingers who are white, or Russian's or someone else, but I admit, I'm scared of blacks and always have been."

"That's really stupid Phil", Jack replied, "they're are best allies."

"Maybe they are, at least we should be allies and many of them are the nicest, kindest most loyal people imaginable, but some of them are at war with me just because I'm white and they're stronger then me. If more people were like Mohammed Ali or Martin Luther King, then I'd be less apprehensive. Ali was arguably the toughest man in the world and he was also sensitive and intelligent enough not to be railroaded into going to a war he didn't believe in."

Jack laughed, "kind of like the old line about `what if they gave a war and nobody came'."

"Yeah, maybe he was sure enough of his manhood that he didn't need to shoot other people to prove he was tough", Phil said.

"Well he also didn't need a job, like a lot of soldiers do when they sign up", Jack protested.

"Heck, do you think he would have gone even if he did need a job?", Phil said with a sneer.

"One thing I've never done is get a pretzel to break just the way I want, by nibbling on it so it will look like an e. Whoa, I did it", Phil said amazed at the timing of his success and at the misplaced bite that did the trick.

Phil stashed all his stuff into the usual places and got out of the car hurriedly, he wanted to get into the house as soon as possible in order to arouse less ire from Sharon.

He hopped up the steps from the garage into the house and took a left turn into the laundry room. Kneeling down Phil opened the Boston Terriers cage and released his pet.

"Mr. Snoopy", Phil chastised playfully. "Mr. Snoopy, who's been locked up in this little cage for the last hour and a half."

The little dog wagged his almost non-existent stump of a tail and smiled wide, showing his small bulldog like jaws and teeth.

"Mr. Snoopy, who would have been running around the house tearing things up if I hadn't locked him up!", Phil finished his pretend scolding of the dog.

Snoopy was only one and a half and still in that playful puppy stage.

The dog had been knocking over garbage cans and chewing up everyone's socks. Just today Phil had found one of his own gloves which he had laid on the register to dry, moved to the area around the back French doors. Fortunately Snoopy had not chewed it up.

"Help yourself if you need a drink", Phil kidded the little dog. "You know where the toilets are." Phil didn't know if the toilets were the dog's first choice or last, but he knew that the dog sometimes drank out of it when his own water bowl was full.

It's pretty sad thought Phil, he had just bought a forty pound bag of dog food for Snoopy. He had selected the food based on color, since the little dog tended to hurl his chow and this brand of dog food at least matched the carpet.

"I think you'd be crazy to change what you're doing and I think I'd be crazy to change what I'm doing", Phil told his father regarding consulting and life in general. "But then, maybe I'm crazy too."

"Yeah, you get blasted for whatever you're doing", Dad said.

"I know what you mean", Phil replied in agreement. "No matter what you do you don't satisfy a darn soul out there, so you might as well not wonder what any of them think."

"Yeah, I'd be a bad boy to keep that computer", Phil told his father. "I'll be hurting IBM and the way things are going, it could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. After all there's nothing wrong with the computer, they've just given me too good of a guarantee."

"I must be a bad boy, or else I just have an overactive imagination, because I'm always schemeing", Phil said.

"I would say that it depends on if you just imagine these schemes, or if you perpetrate them on society", his father counceled.

"Ah, yeah Dad", Phil said uncomfortably. "I'll have to work on that one."

He knew the honest thing to do would be to keep the computer, but on the other hand he was thinking of adding insult to injury by keeping the leather carrying case and the software IBM had included for his new smaller notebook computer. After all the new smaller one he was buying off the TV shopping network didn't come with these valuable extras.

He had just sold an expensive report to an IBM spinoff two months ago, on Christmas eve in fact. "What goes around comes around", Phil thought very unoriginally. He was thinking in terms of some good luck that might come from acting honestly in this case.

"Dad, the new one's an IBM too, don't you think that makes it okay, since I'm just trading it for another of their products?", Phil tried to legitimize what he had already decided to do.

"You decide that for yourself." Was the reply.

"Heck", continued Phil. "For the price of the one I'm sending back and getting a full refund on, I'll be able to get a more compact notebook computer and a portable IBM printer. See. I'm getting two IBM products instead of just one?! Won't that help the company twice as much as owning one of their machines? If that doesn't prove it's the fair and right thing to do, I don't know what does."

Dad just sat there and scratched his head, disappointedly in bewilderment. Was it his fault he wondered, how this boy had turned out. Had he done things so wrong? Was that why his son had turned bad.

The strongest force holding him back from doing it was Sharon, he'd have to subtly persuade her that it was right too, otherwise he'd have a guilty conscience. He had to trick her into saying that he should send it back, that would get the devil off his back and his easily appeased conscience would leave him alone.

"On the other hand", he thought, "there's no reason to even tell her that I know now the battery and re-charging systems are just fine."

As long as Sharon didn't know he had discovered that he was wrong about the notebook computer being defective, he wouldn't have to do anything about her. His conscience would understand, after all it was pretty weak lately.

"What are you going to do?", Dad asked.

Phil grinned sheepishly, "I'm going to try not to return it, but I won't be sure what my decision is till they contact me and tell me my refund authorization number is about to expire."

"They may never call you", Dad finished the conversation.

"Buy American or Bye America", Phil didn't know exactly why he was posting those bumper stickers on every telephone pole in town.

It's either to ease or appease my conscience, he thought. "It's a public service announcement", he told Jack. "And it's an advertisement for my insurance business too." He had his insurance agency's phone number on the bottom of the bumper sticker.

"Well it's hypocritical as all get out", Jack replied with irritation. "Why don't you just stop doing market research for the Japanese if you feel that way?"

"I guess I'm too lazy", Phil answered non-chalantly, but inside he was upset. "Not to mention that it pays the bills."

"Hey!", Phil continued. "I'm not saying people should have to buy American, I'm not saying you're unpatriotic if you don't buy American..."

"That's what it is...", Jack interjected.

"Well, maybe", Phil replied. "But I'm just saying what I believe is a cause and effect relationship, I'm not saying I care if it happens. I'm not sure I think America's worth saving."

"Oh man!", Jack said jumping up. "You're so full of crap. If it wasn't for the freedom the U.S.A.'s given you, you wouldn't even be able to make a living doing the shit you do."

Phil was at a loss, he hadn't really figured out how he felt about all this, he was basically doing the bumper sticker to quell some uncomprehensible guilt feelings inside.

"I don't support or oppose Koresh down in Waco for have more than one wife and the ladies can't make me support shooting him and his group down for that alone. If there's child abuse or the like, then I support bringing him to court. There he can explain his case and see if a jury of this society's regular folk will acquit him, if he's innocent they probably will. It's tough if he's innocent, because maybe he isolated himself in that compound to get away from the world. If he's guilty of real child abuse, there should be no place he can isolate himself to, just to get away with it. If he's not really hurt anybody, then it would be nice if society would leave them alone so they can do their own thing. It's just hard to figure if his flock is brainwashed or free. It might be too bad that there's no place a group can go to be free of government interference. Only space or the most remote island might work. But if those are accessible, then a madman would really have his followers under his control, since the authorities would be so far away.

"That's easy for you to say", said Vaughn, after all it's not your ox that's getting gored." "Since you believe in the conspiracy history of history, what do you think of the Bible verse that says to be wary of conspiracy talk. In my opinion, you seem to de-value certain races or nationalities who you think are behind the conspiracies. Does that mean that your own Scotch, Irish and English should be considered expendable since they have their own secret societies? It's funny how you blame those societies on other nationalities and justify persecuting those entire nations because they were supposedly the basis of all the trouble in the world. You certainly seem to dehumanize Arabs and many Asians because of some of the strange practices they have. No wonder some Arabs and Asians return the distrust of Westerners. Just like skin color, culture and religion unfortunately are excuses for hating other people.

"Don't let the bad blood of the ages re-emerge and let us turn mad towards each other. That is something that has gotten man into trouble too many times in the past and the present. We can't go crying to God for mercy after we've messed things up beyond repair", Phil said.

"Yes you can!", Vaughn exclaimed. "That's one of the nice things about God, he always seems ready to consider forgiving sinners and giving them another chance."

"As Steven Tyler said, "the judges constipation has gone to his head, his wife's aggravation...you're better off dead, it's the same old song and dance."

"I'll do all I can to help people of color, except sell the farm", Phil said.

"What the heck do you mean?", said Tyrone. "It sounds to me like you don't want to give any money to help poor people."

"No, I just don't want to give what I consider giving away the farm amounts of money."

"Well you'll pay the price later then", said Ty.

"You have to draw the line somewhere", Phil exclaimed, "otherwise we're just passing on our problems to our grandkids and kids."

"You have to think about others too. If you don't give poor kids a little help, they'll fall by the wayside by the millions and they'll take you, your kids and your grandkids down with them", Ty exclaimed back.

"You might be right", Phil shook his head as he spoke and lit another cigarette. "I don't know what to do."

"I don't expect the government to solve these problems or to protect me from violence and I'm sure as heck not strong enough to protect anyone."

"No one's immune from violence, when societies are class divided", Tyrone remarked.

"No one's immune from violence even if they aren't", Phil shot back.

Tyrone shot Phil a look and finished the discussion, with that meaningful expression.

"I'll tell you one thing", Phil continued. "I'll take the founding fathers over the present "fathers" anyday. I like Jefferson and Washington a heck of a lot better than Clinton and Bush."

"It's all the same to me", Tyrone said visionarily. "For my people it's usually not mattered who the great white buffalo in Washington DC is."

"Sound's like you should be joining the kkk", Tyrone said.

"Heck I'd be tempted", thought Phil. "Shit, they wouldn't take me anymore then they'd take you. I'm a halfbreed, they ethnically cleanse the hell out me."

"That's right the Hell out of you", Vaughn said bursting open the door and overhearing the conversation."

"I'm against abortion and I'm for womens choice, so where does that leave me?", Phil asked Vaughn. "Since you know everything, where does that leave me?."

"Sitting squarely on the fence as usual", Vaughn answered. "Well I'd rather see people on a sitting on a fence then sitting on a tank."

He continued in his attempt to prepare lunch, but he was having trouble deciding whether to make a sandwich and soup or zap something frozen like a burrito. The microwave meal idea was probably less healthy but Phil cared only that it was easier. "I need a no brainer today," he said to himself. Ty and Vaughn looked at each other wondering what there strange friend was talking about.

"We're never gonna solve any of this unless we put our trust in Jesus", said Vaughn.

"Amen to we need God to help us", Tyrone stated.

"Amen to God or whatever you want to call the positive power in the universe, even if you call it mathematical probability.", Phil ended.

KILL RATIO

"We had a kill ratio of 1,000 to one when we fought the gulf war", said the American.

"We're killing Arabs, not just any Arab, we we're killing Iraqis. Their leader is like Hitler and that makes them like Hitler's soldiers", the man went on.

As an Arab American who didn't look the part, Phil was privy to remarks like this all the time.

He was part of an unseen minority, he didn't know anyone else like himself, although he knew there were a few like him out there. He probably could even find a few first generation Arab Americans like him, but it would be hard. It wasn't like other minorities and the majority, where you could look at someone and tell if they were one of you and furthermore there were generally millions of them in the U.S.A., often in their own enclaves. As a forty year old Egyptian Americans with very light skin and reddish brown hair Phil fit in cosmetically with the anglo-saxon American except for his hooked nose and big bottom lip. So he really didn't fit in anywhere, any other Egyptian American his age probably would be from such different circumstances from Phil's, that they would have little in common. Besides, Phil had never even met another Egptian American his age period. He was a man without a peer group that he could identify, he was left with peer groups and role models that did not fit. The only role models that he could look to, were the universal ones that appealed across ethnic and racial lines. The exaggerated, beleaguered, impossible heroes and anti-heroes in the movies and other anti-heroes appealed to him as they did to everyone, but he had no realistic role models that he was the "same" as.

"We didn't just kill

Phil had gone to college by osmosis. He had sat in class, staring at the pretty girls doodling in his notebook as he took a few unconcious notes. It was like watching TV, but his brain was not on the same

channel as the instructor. He was usually thinking about anything but the lecture. Somehow though he managed to absorb enough information to barely be graduated out the back door, with a minimal grade point average. Thanks to his parents urgings, he kept attending classes for the seven years it took him to graduate. And they were right, it was worth it. Even though he hadn't learned a lot in the classroom, he had learned a few things in and out of class during those years. The diploma meant as little as the fake sheepskin they now printed them on, but it had no doubt opened some doors for him.. He remembered his college days with tremendous fondness, but it wasn't for the classroom part, which he could hardly remember, it was instead for the friends and times he could remember, good and bad.

Phil was a bread butterer. Even in the 25th century, they used people to do menial labor like this. Afterall, people still needed jobs so in Phil's case he worked 1 hour a day buttering crusty rolls for patrons at an expensive local restaurant. Unlike in the 20th century when a person who might do such work all day and barely earn a living wage, now it was only necessary to work an hour a day to earn a wage that provided an even higher standard of living. The only difference was that in the 20th century people still had an inkling of self respect and freedom and a few shreds of self-respect. In the 25th century earthlings and spacefolk alike were of two classes the lower class was usually a product of genetic engineering and subject in some of the satellites and on earth to a life devoid of freedom of choice they had been engineered to be passive and productive or at least to be passive. The universe's economy largely revolved around the health care and life perpetuation industry. People were living for thousands of years and the technology, goods and services that enabled people to cheat the reaper were the driving force of the economy even more than in the past.

But as in the past, the upper class still ran the economy, they still had the money and the brains and they used the marketplace and bio-engineering to keep it that way. Now however, instead of passing their wealth down to their offspring only, they also passed it down to themselves.

The class struggle was not completely over, but it was largely reduced. Poor kids could still make it, but most of them didn't care anymore. Generations of being cared for by the government kept the masses content, they just kept reproducing the old fashioned way and living for hundreds of years under government health care organ recycling programs. But there was still occasional violence, mostly because of the occasional psychopaths that were born, slipping through weeding out measures.

Of course from planet to planet and satellite to satellite, the exact way the society ran varied greatly and there were some societies where individuals still lived much like in the 20th century with those values and laws, but overall it was a far different world. People generally had tons of leisure time and much less work time and like today they weren't completely content, they were in many ways happier, but as always they were still unfulfilled, just like their cro-magnon ancestors. The quest for fulfillment had not yet been engineered out of the human soul. No one had undisputedly found that gene yet and some said it didn't exist, but others were working feverishly to find it and unlock that secret door. There was still demand for such a secret weapon.

"Gulag Americana"

Who is incarcerated in jail, the "Gulag Americana"

seconds, for the kids who were in better shape and had stronger arms, pound for pound, they could probably hold on for thirty to forty seconds.

Was it logical to save himself first by pulling himself up and then save, Sharon. He thought it was logical and it would show the kids that he loved their mother if he saved her first. The problem was would they hold on long enough for him or maybe Sharon to get to them to help them pull themselves up.

Theoretically the kids were probably the most capable of doing pullups in the family. But he didn't know what he'd do, would instinct take over and if so then what?

Phil was becoming less and less a doubting Thomas, as his faith gradually grew. He realized that sin might be a trend, might be fashionable, might seem to offer advantages to him, but that still didn't make it right.

Also God has reportedly put severe sanctions on it.

Tell me why did you do that, was it to appease me.

Give me a break, I'm just a poor stupid guy trying to survive, leave me alone.

"No you're not a poor stupid guy and you're not trying to survive, you're trying to get over on everyone.

Watch, it now", Phil exploded. "I've declared independence from the government, give me a break or I'll declare independence from you too!"

"If that's an offer to leave, great!", Sharon countered. "Nothing would make me happier then for you to hit the road."

"You can hit the road too", Phil mumbled to himself.

"Everything you do should be to honor God, not to dishonor him and you do not do honor to him enough.

"I can't understand my dog, much less God", Phil said still grumbling and mumbling as he got up and walked out to the back deck for some peace and quiet and fresh air.

There have always been scoundrels, but never before in history have free men given up their rights, just to appease those who are troubled by bad men. This has just led to more men becoming bad men, because they have less freedom and control over their circumstances then before.

Well", Phil told Sharon and the judge, "I would take the vows again, at least under the same circumstances.

"Oh", Sharon responded. "Does that mean that you wouldn't repeat them if I hadn't been pregnant already. Do you mean you never had any love for me?"

"No, it just means that we've been at each other's throats for most of the last ten years and I don't think I would opt for that if we were dating and you didn't get pregnant.

You still didn't answer my question.

For me true love can not exist where there is fear, threats and accusations, does that answer it.

Oh don't you sound noble. Sharon spat out, "you don't know the first thing about love, true or otherwise, not unless there's more in it for you than for me.

"There you go, accusing and judging.

"I wish I could just divorce you and get it over with", Sharon said in frustration, which was her primary emotion. She was trying so hard to do things right that she was in a constant state of tizziness.

"If you believed in Jesus as much as you say you do, you'd be a lot less likely than you are to throw stones. Your problem is that you don't believe in him although you shout to the heavens that you do. Your brand of hatred is just as sinful as anything else and cloaking in in self-righteousness makes it worse. You are the ones who are like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

"You're going to hell!", Vaughn shouted, having heard the exchange.

"God will decide that if he hasn't already. As far as what you believe that's your business. It's not your fault that you've believed the fire and brimstone part and not the love your brother part, that is human nature and that's the message that got drilled into your head the most. That's your survival instinct and society's telling you what you should do to preserve yourself and your loved ones. You just haven't seen through the haze of BS, that what is best for you can be compatible with not throwing your brothers and sisters to the wolves if they don't agree with you. And it's not just you and Vaughn that believe the lie, most all of us do to some degree. Maybe there is some sect that really practices peace, peace, peace, but I've never seen them.

"When the law is broken, it has to be upheld", said Vaughn forthrightly.

"Yeah, but you make the penalty fit the crime, which might mean an eye for an eye, but where does it say a violent sentence for a non-violent crime.

"Those are not victimless crimes Phil", Sharon argued. "There are definately people getting hurt when you smoke and drink and carry on."

"Maybe that's true, but you don't make a difference between getting hurt and not getting your way, so I'm not about to hand my rights over to you to be my judge and jury.

Don't you cry tonight, I still love you, don't you cry tonight there's a heaven above you...Guns and Roses.

Ever notice that "yow whee" rhymes with "Yahwew", maybe when the first people realized that there was a God, they said that word real loud.

Anyone can be judgemental, but few are qualified to be a judge and only God is really qualified to judge.

"It makes as much sense to me to throw smoke smokers into jail as it does to throw cigarette smokers and beer drinkers in", said Phil.

In the background Chrissy Hinds of the Pretenders whaled "I'm bold as love", singing a Jimmi Hendix song it ended and excitable boy by Warren Zevon started, keeping Phil in the same rock and roll frame of mind. The station called it progressive rock, but that was not really where it was at for Phil.

"Well then you're sure, it's cancer?", asked Jack.

"Cancer or AIDs or something newly identified that's terminal", Phil said.

"How much time do you have left to live?", Jack wanted to know. "And what are you going to do with that time?"

"What am I going to do?", Phil was shocked at this question which he thought was insensitive to a dying person.

"I don't know what the hell I'm going to do. I guess I'll try to get my affairs in order so that I don't leave Sharon and the kids with any more problems than they'll already have."

"But I haven't given up, they say there is a slight chance of remission or a cure.

"Funny, but if you survive the disease you're going to have to die anyway to satisfy the IRS", joked Jack.

"Yeah that's if MITI or the CIA doesn't do it first", Phil said nervously.

"Well anyway, I haven't seen you around for months, guess you didn't need any smoke", Jack's tone was cynical, but not discernably angry.

"Huh, what do you mean?", Phil asked.

"Well I had always figured that you were only friendly because I could get you your shit. You haven't stopped by here for six months, so it looks like you were just using me.

Phil grew quite and serious, "Oh come on, that's not true."

"Well", Jack went on, "you do have another source right?"

"Yeah, I do, but I can't help it if...", Phil had certainly thought about this before and he tried to remember his planned defenses.

"Is it because you're cheap or are you just anti-social?", Jack continued his onslaught.

"It's not like you can just go to the corner store and buy it. How would I know if I came around for the smoke or the conversation, It's not reasonable for you to judge me."

"I don't have to judge you, I'd have to be stupid not to be able to figure out by you're almost daily contact dropping off to six months, that you only came over for the smoke, not for the conversation.

"This is making me sick", Phil said.

"Maybe I am cheap, but I've also been advised that I'm not doing you any favors by sharing it with you anyway. Afterall, it's bound to make you less productive and I know a couple of gals who don't want me to do that to you. Phil was thinking of their wives, but the fact that he was a cheapskate, was the dominant reason and he knew it. He knew it, but wasn't sorry about it.

"You're right though", Phil volunteered. "It's mostly because the shit's expensive and I'm not rich, but I am lazy, so why should I support anyone else's habit too?"

"You son of a bitch!", Jack screamed in a rare show of emotion. He hadn't taken it like Phil had been hoping he would.

The pastor said something in his prayer like, thank you God for this opportunity to worship you in a corporate way. Later that week, Sharon mentioned to Phil that the church allowed members to be immersed in private to become members.

"Well you ought to do it, and I'm pretty sure the kids would like to also", Phil said absentmindedly.

"I might do it", she said. "I don't want to push you, it's got to be your own decision, but you can too."

"Well, I'll go too", Phil said with little or no conviction. All his usual questions would of course resurface. Was this joining the local church a good idea. The pastor had mentioned in one sermon how being a member of the church made one responsible in certain ways to the church and its members and their goals. That's what bugged him, their goals, were certainly not always his goals and he didn't want to feel like he was under their thumb. They of course always claimed to be prayerfully doing what they believed was God's will, but he parted company with them on that assumption.

He didn't want them breathing down his neck, telling him what his causes celeb should be etc. He didn't want to be a good German in the local "lord's" army, or a company man in the local corporate church. He had told Sharon he would join and had told her that it was by free will, but upon reflection, he realized that he was doing it for the wrong reasons. He was mostly doing it so that the kids could be in with the "in" crowd at church and school. That obviously was not a great reason, but was it wrong.

He did believe that there was an infinitely powerful God out there and that world history and development was not completely the result of some statistical variation or random chance that could be captured someday by a mathematical equation like $E=MC^2$. He believed in the intelligence and direction of God behind the laws of nature and therefore the probability of an evil intelligence behind the forces of chaos. He wondered about the chart in the front of Sharon's study Bible, comparing passages from the Bible with Akkadian and other tablets and scrolls, but he still would rather march behind the cross, than behind any other religious symbol. He now had heard wisdom that compared to Christ's and the miracles of Jesus seemed baseless or akin to Benny Hin's miracles. This gave him little hope that there was soul existence after death based on Christianity. He was sorely trying to do his best to spread the truth.

The right to drink, smoke, look at or listen to what you want was under attack and maybe rightfully so, since there was irrefutable evidence that some of these things led to general mayhem.

The responsibility not to drive wasted or commit violence. The wisdom not to try every stupid fad that comes down the pike. The knowledge that giving up our rights guarantees nothing except that we have lost our rights and that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. Free you free me, don't free you and shackle me.

What about evolution? Is it true? That's a good question, but a better question is what about God, what about heaven, what about hell, is that true. That's what the unsaved need to think about most, not did we come from monkeys. If we did, then we're both an embarrassment to each other.

Phil called his little dog Corky over and shotgunned smoke at him. "Maybe this will mellow you out", Phil chuckled to the terrier. Corky wanted to play with the little Maltese, but the tiny dog called Snowflake didn't want to and growled at Corky. Tiny as he was, Snowflake didn't take shit from anyone,

always ready to show his stuff. When you're that little you have to take any possible threat seriously, so Snowflake was always snapping, he had drawn blood on both of Phil's kids already. Corky was the only beneficiary of second-hand smoke at their house. He was also Phil's silent conspirator in everything, since Phil took him with him in the car most of the time. Corky knew everything Phil did, good and bad, but he of course kept everything to himself. Man's best friend was true about dogs. When was the last time a dog intentionally betrayed his master or lectured him on morals and responsibility.

Well we'd visit you more if it didn't cost so much", Phil told his parents.

Phil figured this was where he needed to act guilty about not being able to earn enough money to take the family by plane to the grandparents at least once a year. If he had become a doctor or lawyer or engineer or chairman of the board as parents always hope for, he could afford it.

Sorry Dad, we just can't afford to come more often

"Yeah", mom and dad thought in unison, "if he'd just stayed straight, he wouldn't be such a lazy bum, he could have been a successful executive."

He had developed an inflammation at his connect point. The connect point was the place on the neck where the brain stem from the old body connected to the new body. People cloned themselves over and over again, hoping that their brain tissue would never wear out. This was in the old days, before they had learned to download meditronically.

And always there was the question were they cheating God, because they all knew they were just postponing death, not eliminating it. Was the first person to bandage a gushing wound guilty of cheating God too? Of course not, but that's different said Vaughn. There was also the question of were they cheating the spare clones of their lives and souls. Clones of all ages were kept by people and they had no existence other than the bizarre zombie-like state of suspended animation that they were kept in, spare parts or yet to be activated new bodies. They were activated when new brains were swapped for their so called empty ones, or activated when a brain or disk was downloaded into one of them.

...AND WHEN THE DOG'S SMELL HER, WILL SHE SMELL ALONE? PEARL JAM?

We all judge others to see if they're performing as we want them to. If they're not, we use whatever we have at our disposal, money, threats, sex, the law etc. to "correct" their behavior. Now freedom loving people are again surrendering their freedom. We have not been vigilant, so they've become vigilantes. We are paying the price, we must therefore either; fight, get them to let up, submit to them or leave the country, planet or whatever like new pioneers.

"Ain't it fun, when you know that you're going to die young", G&R? sarcastic and cynical, but not without some truth.

"I may not be objective enough to comment on whether or not it should be legalized, but I'm objective enough to say that what they say happens to you once you're in prison is wrong", Phil said.

Just as Christians are better off, not better than non-Christians, "moral majority" people are just better off than others, not better. All are still sinners, whether recognizable or not. Non should judge the other.

"You are calling me a bastard because my interests no longer coincide with your's", Phil said.

No, I'm calling you a sinner because your actions do not coincide with the bible.

Do your's?", Phil replied.

"What's worse in your opinion", Phil asked Vaughn, that I'm going to work to stop prison rape then it is that I smoke this stuff."

Vaughn hesitated, "both things are a waste of time, that's all I have to say. One of those things should get you thrown into prison, but I don't think you should get raped, there. I'm not as interested in doing anything about it as you are. It seems you have more of a vested interest in it than I do."

"Oh good, I thought you would say it's worse for me to try to put a stop to prison rape, than it is for prison rape to be taking place", Phil remarked.

That's a different thing entirely", Vaughn answered, wondering if Phil realized that he was not making much sense, because he was mixing things up and stuttering.

"That's right I know that if I laid baby Willy down he would probably cry for 15 minutes and then go to sleep. If you wanted me to babysit on your terms, you could have asked me to instead of just saying would you please pick him up if he cries. You knew there was a 50/50 chance that he'd cry, so if you expect me to hold him for two hours while you're gone, discuss the options with me. Don't forget I'm a man and have forgotten the odds of little babies crying when their mommies leave.

"Jesus", she replied. "All I asked was a simple thing, I didn't expect to get a lecture over it. "Since when are you expert enough to know that kids will cry for 15 minutes, who are you Dr. Spock?, you fucking know it all.

"I happened to hear that from an 84 year old grandma and nanny that was interviewed on TV, but I expect many women and men have known that little trick for eons. It's not necessary to reinvent the wheel.

"Whack!", Phil side-kicked the attacker on the shin as that was the only place he could hit solidly in his unwarmed up condition.

"Don't try that again or the next kick will be on your nose!", he said aggressively, knowing that he couldn't hit anyone in the nose with a sidekick no matter how warmed up he was.

"Fine. If women eventually control the government via their large numbers, then men should start a men's union. This way they can lobby and apply pressure to the women in power not to trample over our civil rights. In the end it will work or there will be revolution", Phil finished self assuredly and pickup up his warm tea.

"You are so crazy, I guess I shouldn't be surprised by anything you say", Sharon was amused.

"Yeah, someday if women really do get the upper hand, you'll probably see women mandate the bio-engineering of people. Women will be made bigger and stronger than normal men. They will allow engineering of hunks, but these will have their brains altered to be so stupid and happy go lucky that women will be able to hypnotize them at will. Normal males like me with a normal set of drives will be aborted", he was full of information today.

"Yeah, right, Shit. Why don't you look at what's happening today in China and India and even in the U.S.A. in the area of female infanticide, are you fucking blind? I wouldn't even press for the abortion of mutants like you.", Sharon set the record straight.

"You really are doing something with your face aren't you?", Sharon changed the subject.

Phil had his face screwed up, he was pursing his lips like when you get ready for a kiss.

"Tell me are you?", Sharon asked more sternly.

"Why should I tell her what she already knows", Phil thought. "You know what I'm doing, so why talk about it."

I just want to that's why",

"Yeah, but you use whatever I say to incriminate me, so why should I admit to anything, that's counterproductive Phil tried to defend his position.

"Yeah, for you it's counterproductive, but for the kids and I it would be productive for you to get control of your life.

"Hey, Sharon, half the worlds on some kind of coping medication, why shouldn't I be. You understand it when the kid's get grumpy if they haven't had a dose, why should it be different for me

"Oh, why don't you get fucked, I suppose you need a dose every four hours.

"Yeah", Phil smiled, I need a dose of fucking and of my medicine every four hours, unfortunately I don't get them. Actually there was no way he could handle sex every four hours, but that was besides the point during this argument.

That marriage and monogamy are generally good was a valid point, but the homosexual agenda could not definitely be called valid, so Phil didn't want to argue for it, he was trying to change his ways. It was quite possible as some argued that homeosexuals were born that way, but it could also be argued that some were not born into it and had adapted it because of confusion over their sexual identity. Confusion that could be caused by lack of proper role models, sexual molestation or other things. Which brought Phil to the question of those that advocated "consensual" sex with children, bang, bang was the first thing that came into his mind. "Consensual" sex with children was a crock of shit, because kids were certainly not fully aware of the consequences of their actions. Anyone that could be lured to doing a sex act for a chocolate bar or new puppy was too young. Even if you argue that grownups do the act for compensation in a way, they at least know about consequences and market values.

"Down on the street those men are all the same, I need a love not games... life is crazy", Candy said in the song by Iggy Pop and some fabulous female vocalist.

"Don't leave me", Phil told Sharon. "If you do, you'll be playing into my hands and I don't want you to do that anymore."

"You son of a bitch, how can you be so low. I don't care if I play into your hands or not, you've made your bed, now you're going to lay in it!"

"Honey, I'm sorry!", Phil apologized. "I did all those things to lead you into it back when I felt differently about things. Back then I didn't want things to workout. Now I've changed and I beleive that marriage should be forever. I'm not waiting for you to burnout so I can leave you old and alone, now I want to grow old with you."

"Too damn, late", Sharon blurted, before growing strangely pensive.

"We have seen the end and we win", the preacher said. "I don't say this with joy, because I know that in the process a lot of people on both sides will be lost, forever, decieved into believing the anti-Christ. A lot of very good people are going to go down forever, not to mention a great many very good people who are going to loose their mortal lives too soon.

"Could Hitler have been the anti-christ?", Phil asked the Pastor.

"No, I don't see how he could have been, the other parts of prophecy like the establishment of the state of Israel, worldwide evangelism and other things that would have to take place first, hadn't happened."

"Phil had to agree that it was unlikely, but he still wondered if everyone including the best evagelical Bible scholars would be surprised beyond belief.

"My opinions vary according to several factors", Phil said trying to get off the hook.

"According to what?", he was asked by a member of the crowd.

"Oh, according to who I'm talking to, what side of the bed I got up on or who's holding a gun to my head.

"What the heck?", a man said.

"So what is it you believe in? God or bell shaped curves, make up your mind."

Some people are smart enough to tell you why it rains, but not smart enough to come in out of it.

The man, a black friend of Martin Luther King, told Martin, "I will keep my arms, because it can bark here and bite way down the street..

INDEPENDENCE DAY

11/6/95

"I will not spend my life making up alibis, lies and excuses about why I smoke", Phil started thinking. They will find out when they find out and that is that, nine year old Joey had just indirectly questioned him about yesterday.

Phil and Sharon had gone a couple of rounds the night before and Phil had broken a candleholder and a broom in his anger. They had been arguing about a pair of panties that she had found on the basement floor. She had asked her brother who was sleeping in their basement for a few months about the panties and he had told her he found them in Phil's coat pocket. That was enough for Sharon to suspect Phil of

infidelity. When she asked him to look at them and tell her if he knew who they belonged to, he had lost his temper. She had a right to ask, but being angry, her tone had been angry, which had made Phil angry right back.

Getting back to Joey, he had just heard bits and pieces of the argument, including something about something being found in Phil's pocket. "Did she find some joints dad", he had asked.

Phil's mind switched tracks and he got back to his internal debate about joining the local church. "I will not join the local church that we are going to because I am not like minded enough with their views. I am not in total or even enough agreement with their religion and their politics. They would say he should just worry about religion, but then they also sometimes said that religion and politics are intertwined. I am not in enough agreement with their religion and their politics to join. I hope they will still accept my wife and kids.

The radio show on fetal alcoholism made Phil think of it's connection to eugenics and abortion. The speaker said that fetal alcohol babies brains did not develop the same as normal babies, because of the changes that go on or don't go on in their brains. Most of them end up adapted, the speaker went on. They are hyperactive and have ADD, he said. Would the eventual warped solution be to have the woman abort or genetically alter the fetus or baby. Sick as that is, it's been done by Germany, it's being done by China and if we're not careful, it will be done here. Did you just say, "oh good, we need to get rid of those kind anyway." Well you'd be changing your tune if you realized that none of us would pass the ever higher standards that would evolve as society evolved.

The alternative is to lock 'em up and throw away the key.

I believe God can do whatever he want's with us, take us to heaven, send us to hell, he's got the power to do whatever he wants. But I wonder why the word Gehenna was translated as the word hell in the Bible - Gehenna was a trash dump outside of Jerusalem. It's odd enough that tartaros, cheol and hades also were translated to the same word hell. In the English of King James day, hell meant a hole in the ground, such as where potatoes were stored in the winter, hundreds of years before refridgerators.

The wives, churches, psychiatrists, parents, children, police, politicians and everybody else should accept smoke in the same way they accept cigarettes, beer and wine. If they reject those things, they should reject smoke in the same way, but not in the hysterical life ruining way they now do.

You moralistic ones from the left should stop telling everyone what to do, because you're man made institutions have a lousy track record. You moralistic ones from the right should stop telling everyone what to do, cause we're not so sure that God is the one telling you what's right all the time.

You can't put a square peg in a round hole", Phil said.

"What do you mean?", Vaughn wondered.

"I'd rather not answer any of your questions right now. I want the freedom to worship however I want, so I'll worship alone if necessary.

Lately Phil was spending a fair amount of time in his car in the black neighborhoods surrounding the house he had bought on Centennial Street. He was doing a lot of cleanup and repair work at this house that he had bought from the VA as an investment and rental property. A slum lord some friends and acquaintances were calling him. It was a run down neighborhood populated 99% by good people, 80% of

them black. It occurred to Phil that whenever he was driving to and from the Centennial Street his radio often seemed to end up on black stations. Maybe, it wasn't strange, since they were in a black neighborhood, it was logical that as he pressed the scan button, there was a high likelihood that the radio would stop on a black station. The strange thing was that Phil was leaving it there. This was unlike in the past when he would have automatically kept pressing the scan button till a whiter station came on. It seemed that being around blacks, talking to his black neighbors at Centennial, seeing their children play, was making the black blood in him come out. But always before dark, he would return to his lilly white neighborhood. In this enclave Phil knew there wasn't much of anything black except maybe some hearts, regardless, in some primal way he felt safer there with "his" people.

"I believe in God, not in a committee of gods, or of men or women. I don't believe much of the Bible, but I would not change one letter or word, hell enough words have been changed already, despite the threats of violence against anyone who would change the "word". There is no reason to, because if you look at it, it says evangelize, not prothelitize, it says, mercy and justice, not kill them all and let God sort them out, see the four scriptures below, attributed to Jesus, for further clarification.

"Jesus forgive me", Phil prayed. as he ate the communion craker. "Jesus save me", he prayed as he drank the tiny cup of grape juice that symbolized Christ's blood. Phil saw the bread as symbolic of Phil's sinful human life full of needs and desires and his ill conceived attempts to survive and make gains. To the church the blood symbolized the saving and cleansing qualities of Jesus's blood - qualities that Phil needed very much, but which he didn't believe the church or for that matter, Jesus could deliver. Since Phil's walk didn't match his talk and certainly didn't match the Bible's examples, he desperately needed salvation by grace and he prayed for it with all his might and all his heart. It was his only chance, but he no longer believed that the Bible's version was true.

LIKE A FAT MAN WITH THE MUNCHIES

Phil was going through the kitchen like a fat man with the munchies. Afterall that was what he was becoming.

"I caught you again", Sharon shouted. She was still capable of being an angry woman, but since she had started taking prozac, Sharon's rages were muffled.

Of course she had only been taking it for a month, so it was hard to tell for sure how it would effect her in the long run.

"I don't know what you think about proza, but I'm not sure I like what's it's doing to you."

Sharon just stood and looked at him a mellow yellow jello expression on her face, only slight anger discernable.

"Look at you!", he raged. "You can't even get mad anymore, that drug has stolen your fire, it's stolen your soul!"

Sharon stared back and then said, "just like marijuana has stolen your's."

But Sharon was thinking to herself, "why am I saying that, do I believe it?" She knew she didn't like the weed mellowing him out, but she wasn't sure if she wanted prozac mellowing her out.

"Do I like me or the old me better", she mumbled.

Phil had booby traps all around his room, not lethal ones, just annoying ones. Booby traps designed to annoy, irritate and frustrate without physically causing any major harm. It was just little things like the edge of his desk, which was his first booby trap. He had noticed it by accident after stratching his leg on it a hundred times. The rolling desk was made of particle board and the edges were covered with plastic veneer. The veneer had come loose and every time a person walked past it in Phil's very narrow office, it would scratch you leg. If you were wearing shorts or a dress it could hurt. Phil had learned to live with it, but now on noticing it one day, he jokingly started thinking of it as a booby trap to keep people out of his office. Now he tried to devise or discover some more nosey people traps.

"I think one reason women like to shop, is that they like to buy things for other people", Sharon observed.

"Men are more self centered", Phil replied. "You don't see men buying things for other people nearly as much as women do."

"Yes, but that's no excuse for being self-centered", Sharon instructed.

"I don't know", Phil said. "Being self centered can be good or bad. It's good if it means keeping your nose out of other peoples business. You can do too much for other people, even to the point of making parasites out of them. I think we both know of cases of that happening and come to think of it, it's usually moms, grandmas and rich aunts who do it."

Phil sat out by the goldfish pond and stretched his big morning stretch. He saw Sparky get up and walk to a shadier spot, would she stretch, before she laid down Phil wondered? Were stretches contagious like yawns and winks. Everyone knows that when you yawn, it's contagious, at least in humans, but were some of these things cross species contagious? Once or twice, Phil thought that Snoopy had winked back at him when he winked at the dog.

Phil and the kids emptied the dishwasher, their small hands struggling to handle the dishes. "How do you pick so many dishes up at a time", Joey asked.

"Your fingers have to make contact with as many dishes as possible, that's how", Phil instructed. "Your finger tips are very sensitive and if each plate is touched you end up with a good feel for them slipping before they actually do." He removed about five bowls at once from their vertical holder, each stacking against the other. The trick was removing them from the holder en mass instead of one at a time.

THE INNER LIMITS

By now, Phil was imagining every strange thing imaginable. Downloading, resurecting the dead by DNA fingerprints and archeological records and other thing's that were in the last decade of the 20th century, extremely polarizing.

Writing about having delusions of grandeur, which is not an unusual side effect of using drugs. Writing about at first feeling very guilty, but eventually thinking that it might be a nornmal side effect of the drug. If it was a normal side effect, then maybe he was normal too. In any case he wished that the side effect would go away, because without it, he'd be happier.

"I don't care if he finds it or sees it or smells it, I want him to. I want him to learn about it from me, I don't want to exit this world without having him confront me and us verbally fighting it out. I don't want him to find out from someone else and him know that I've lied about it to him all these years.

"Maybe he won't even find out", Sharon said. "Why not just write him an explanation letter that I can give to him when you pass away."

"I, I, I don't know...", Phil stuttered.

"There's no reason to burden him with that baggage right now", Sharon counceled.

Phil observed that men were quite capable of taking care of babies if they wanted to, but they seldom would voluntarily. Women on the other hand, were quite capable of war and murder, but they left that to their men, just like the men left the childrearing to them.

"Are you implying that war is woman's fault", Sharon asked defensively.

"Not as much as it is men's fault, but women have no doubt started a few", Phil argued.

"No, they didn't!", Leslie said coming to Sharon's defense. "The women accused of starting wars, were innocent, it was men that fought wars over the face that launced a thousand ships and the rest of them."

"Well I don't know?", Phil lingered on the point. "I'd like to do some research on that on my own. I definitely agree that women have started far fewer wars, but they should use their influence and power to stop wars more than they have in the past. After all, it's their kids who are dying."

Vaughn was incensed, "are you implying that women should run things? The world would be like a giant beehive. Everybody would be busily doing their jobs like worker bees. Everyone would be engineered for ding their own well defined job within an established matriarchal order. The world would be designed to successfully bring forth a new generation of totally brainwashed workers and drones."

Phil had a flashforward, he was in the future world and being led on the tour of the hive. No one had much more wealth of their own than anyone else, but eveyone was content. The queen provided paid vacations all over the solar system for the women and men of the hive.

"Will you shut up", Phil said.

"Everyone would be as busy as a bee. There would be lots of babies and a few stupid male drones engineered to do their reproductive task and then hit the road and die. The drones that got of line would be killed or dealt with swiftly to maintain order. This isn't so bad for bees, but it sucks for men.

"Don't you realize that society works pretty much like that already?", Phil remarked. "Except in human society it's not just the next generation or the Queen bee that benefits. With humans it's woman and men who benefit. The status quo empowers the powerful to remain powerful and the weak to stay weak. With humans, we have haphazardly used disincentives to make the rowdy upstarts and the riff raff stay in line. In the future if we let them, the same usurpers of freedom who were the royalty of old, the elite of today and the comfortable of all classes will do it like never before. With their genetic engineering, drugs and other means, they can make man more compliant than ever, eventually there would be no humans to

fight for their freedom, because there would be no one left that cared. We'd all be too comfortable or brainless to care. That's more successful than the Queen bee is at enforcing her will.

"Well maybe it's for the best, that's what nature is all about anyway, isn't it, successfully bring forth a next generation.

"Yes well we've gotten so good at it that we have to continually make war to ease the `overcrowding'", Phil answered. "Most people would prefer oppression over chaos as the saying goes. They would trade their security for so called peace."

"Well if you don't like it you can leave", Leslie said. "There's nothing wrong with engineering a more peaceful society, without cold blooded AK-47 wielding killers behind every door.

"Maybe I will leave", Phil thought, imagining a brave new world the opposite of Orwell's 1984 or today's 1994. A federation of satellite communities in space.

Phil was in the hive now and it sucked bigtime. It seemed that all the other men had lost their libido, they were only sexually aroused when the queen told them they should be. Phil was different, he was aroused constantly, just as he had been before. He had not been re-engineered and as such he would have to be mitigated by the authorities if they found out. Until then, he would continue to fantasize as he always had about sex with every good looking babe that he laid his eyes on. As disgusting as the queen and her court would find him to be if they knew, he was happy to be a real red blooded human male and not a drone as society had relegated men to be in the 24th century.

"I'm smarter than a horse", Sparky said matter of factly in her surprisingly high pitched doggie voice.

"That's very nice", Phil replied as he continued combing the dog's winter coat out. It was late June and the 90 degree days were taking a toll on the shepherd malamute mix. The heat and flies were making her miserable, that's one of the reasons Phil had built the goldfish pond, it was also a dog pool.

Phil looked at the young ladies with uncontrollable lust. It was a good thing that Sharon couldn't read his mind, he thought. It would be a hodge podge of

XX. At
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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX least X rated, maybe triple X, about the only thing he didn't fantasize about was doing it with men. He had been taught that lusting in the heart was as bad as doing it in the flesh, so he was caught. He asked for forgiveness, but like smoking, he seemed powerless or uninterested in changing his actions. He didn't think he could ever stop either behavior and he realized that his sporadic prayers for help were probably insincere.

The best thing would have been that he had never been exposed to kinky sex, through the several X rated and many R rated movies and magazines he had seen. Just like drugs, the best way to stay off a vice is never to start and to avoid even being exposed to it.

It was better perhaps not to open those doors, but now that they had been, it was perhaps better not to advertise it to Sharon. If she found out, which she probably would, due to Phil's big mouth, then that was okay, he'd tell her the truth. She would not like it, but she probably knew it already.

Love waxes and wanes. It can grow on you or not grow on you. It can be at first sight or it can take years to even become measurable. It can be shown by one partner but not the other and the balance is always shifting.

Women have been driving forces, not helpless damstrill in distress. They are demanding recognition and asking for respect and they should have both, but they should not have dominion over men anymore then men should have it over them.

Let nature decide who is boss has been the male refrain since time immemorial. Women have always weighed about half as much as men, so they have suffered under the old system. Now that it is possible to win by the vote what had not been won by the sword, will women dominate men through their greater numbers of votes. Of course they will if men let them. Just as men have always been corrupted by their power when they have it, women will too.

"Was it just my imagination, or are you *really* stoned today?", Sharon said angrily.

"Oh no, here we go again", Phil thought.

Some wealthy people kept one or two cloned brains in a state of hibernation, in case they ever needed them. Many cloned their bodies too and had them altered to achieve characteristics that they had always wanted, like larger breasts, bigger chests, blue eyes etc.

"I am like winney the pooh", PHil told the prosecuting attorney. "Sometimes I am a good bear and sometimes I am a bad bear, but I'm not trying to hurt anyone, I am just trying to get a little bit of honey".

Tator this, cheese that, there were all kinds of junk food in the cabinet.

Love affairs are also inevitably battles of the sexes, or at least will be. The battle of ideals, agendas, goals, desires and expectations waxes and wane throughout the life of the love affair. However in some relationships dominance is established at some point and the battle wanes. 7/94 tape.

On the talk radio, the guest was Soupey Sales and the other guest was Tony. "No I'm not tony I'm soupey", the comedian said. Phil wondered about the word tony, did he mean Tony or tony as Phil imagined.

It is one thing to be a complete scoundrel, that is bad. But all men, admittedly or not, are a bit of a soundrel and that is not so bad.

Snoopy was the butler and he looked the part, with his black and white Boston Terrier hairy tuxedo. Sparky was the night watchman or woman in this case. She could prevent grand larceny with her bone crushing jaws and Snoopy would noisily escort the thief to the door. Snoopy was an inside outside dog and Sparky was a 98% outside dog.

"Yes", said Phil, "I have to admit that sometimes the only reason I believe in the Bible is that I've been told a million times that if I don't I'll burn in Hell."

"Admit it", Vaughn ridiculed. "That's the only reason you say you believe in the Bible period."

"Wait a minute", Phil rebutted. "Jesus was so merciful that I have hope in him even though I have my fears. He was forgiving enough to make me feel that in his good news I have a chance despite all the bad news you keep giving me."

Well Sharon didn't come out to the garage and didn't see Phil sitting there listening to the song Chain of Fools, so they couldn't argue about it and Phil couldn't bring up his point to her that it was a fundamental principle that you listen to a good song when you hear it, even if it meant sitting in the garage with the car running for a minute or two when you arrive home. Of course he would not close the garage door until the engine was turned off, but he didn't want to shut the engine off then the battery back on and weaken the continuity of the song, especially since he was recording it on his microcassete.

Phil was caught, so it seemed, Sally was coming into the bedroom and he had no time to hide the bong. Acting automatically, Phil quickly stuffed the bong down his pants.

"Better that I spill it in my shorts than get caught red-handed by my daughter", he thought.

"Dad, what's that smell", she asked.

Joey followed her in and gave Phil a hug, bumping into the bong in the process. His son instinctively retreated when he bumped into the bong in the pants. This had happened before when he occasionally while hugging his father, would bump into Phil's bag of tricks, which he routinely stashed down his pants.

"Dad! You smell like you've been smoking cigarettes or something", the boy queried.

Phil didn't answer, he tried instead to change the subject. It would be better if he could avoid answering the question until Joey was older, the older the better. But outright lying was not a good alternative, so Phil hoped Joey wouldn't continue that line of conversation.

"I'd better start using mouthwash", Phil made a mental note.

What the downloaders offer is not as good as what Jesus offered. Continued mortal existence does not compare to the life that the Bible describes. But, to many people, what the downloaders offered was pretty good, in some of their minds even better than what they expected in the hereafter. Some didn't believe in the hereafter, some did and some didn't want to get there.

"Are you my shadow Pauley asked the light dark man. No said the light dark man, I stand between you and the light, you are my shadow."

Phil swatted at the fly that was pestering him in the kitchen. "I'll get you, you son of a bith."

"I'll carry a fly swatter out to the car too!", he threatened. He jokingly wondered if he and the fly could communicate telepathically.

It was funny that at that moment, the thought came to him that the fly would have the last laugh. Since maggots were fly larvae and humans are in the end finally food for the fly's offspring. "Hum", he pondered, maybe the fly did tell me that."

"How did this twenty get in my wallet?", Sharon wanted to know.

"I put it in there", Phil answered. "I borrowed some money to pay for Joey to go skating." He didn't tell her that he had eaten lunch out with the rest of the money. No reason to volunteer incriminating evidence.

"I don't know how much was in there, but I think it was about ten or fifteen", Phil told Sharon. "I didn't want you to be stranded somewhere with out any money if we weren't together", Phil was trying to score brownie points.

"You knew we had to go out together to get the car, you didn't have to put the money in my wallet. Why did you put it in then?", Sharon quizzed him.

"It was more of a symbolic jestur", Phil told her.

"I think you mean gesture", Sharon corrected him.

They stood outside of the house next to the car as the geese passed overhead.

"Hey dad", Joey said smiling and holding out a handful of bb's. "Shooting them with this many bb's would be like shooting them with a shotgun!"

Phil listened to his son's comment and reflected on Joey's beautiful tone of voice that second. "Hey dad - those are the two most beautiful words in the English language", he thought to himself. The love that boy had made him feel that moment was tremendous.

The children walked around the corner unexpectedly and Phil was caught.

"Dad! What are you doing!", screamed Joey. Sally stood wide-eyed, too young to know what exactly was going on.

"You've caught me", Phil said calmly.

He had taken many precautions not to get caught, because Sharon had convinced him that it was better that the children not know, for as long as possible. That way, she reasoned, they were a little less likely to do it themselves, they could not accidentally narc on their father and they would generally have less pschological baggage related to it to carry around.

Although he had taken many precautions, Phil had purposely left out a few that would have been highly effective, like a motion detector alarm hooked up to the basement door. He wanted to put it off for as long as possible, but he did not want to be obsessed with it. Let nature take it's own path to some extent on this one he thought.

The goal was to be so at ease with your spouse that both of you could do whatever she or he wanted as long as it wasn't directly harming the other one. Normally extracurricular sex and murder were the only things that were not allowed.

When one became so comfortable with ones partner that he or she can do anything and never have to lie or make up excuses, that is the life.

"I'm so liberal, I'm a conservative", Phil said. "And vice versa, that's what liberation is all about. "Nobody hurts anyone else in any way and those that do are removed from society."

"Here take this piece of paper", Phil told Sally. It was a piece of 11"x17" copy paper which he had put in his recycle pile because he had made a mistake when he had enlarged an article on the back of it.

"No I want a new one", the five year old said. "I don't want a used piece of paper."

She was probably testing him Phil thought to himself. She was the big recycler, but as children often do, she was giving Phil a test, to see if he would forget to tell her how recycling is.

He obliged her, "I thought you were the big recycler", he said admonishingly, but gently, because he knew what she was up to.

She laughed, assuring Phil that she knew what she was doing and he had answered her question right. She was tempted to test him because of her natural desire for a fresh piece of paper, after all, we've been taught that they are better.

SUMMERS OF THE FLY SWATTER

The last three summers Phil and his family had been besieged by flies, in the house. A flyswatter was standard equipment for Phil who carried one from room to room, because the flies tormented him. He woke up to them buzzing around his face. The solution had so far evaded him. He had tried fly paper on the back deck, but the wind blew it against the wall. He had invested in an electric bugzapper, but that seemed to do little. He had been planning to make a screened-in porch out of the deck, but had not yet got around to it. He kept telling himself that a fly-swatter and can of bug repellent was a cheaper and better route, but after cookouts and other occasions that seemed to swell their numbers, he regretted that decision. It was not until he started picking up the dog poop, that he started winning the battle with the flies.

"We haven't had a good fight in a month", Phil teased Sharon, not knowing she was already in a bad mood.

"Well we're about to have one!", she seethed back. "I haven't taken my prozac for a week and I'm back to normal and I'm liking it."

They fought for a while and then made up, it was just like old times.

Finally they were in each other's arms, completely oblivious to the fight they'd had, chemistry or nature or something had taken over. She needed sex or aerobics or something so they had it.

"Boy we sure don't fight like we used to. Did I ever tell you about the time was going to knock you off?", Phil's inquiry was very matter of fact.

"What!", Sharon was perplexed and angry. "Are you serious?"

"Ah, no", Phil tried to recover. "I was just making it up."

Sharon knew better on one level, but on another level she wanted very bad to believe him, we all need someone we can depend on and she had been counting on this lug for years, the last thing she wanted to hear now was that he was thinking of killing her.

"Hi!", Phil said it loud and clear. He saw it as the perfect greeting, a way of giving Sharon a status report, that he was high and a perfectly appropriate greeting.

Phylis is a part time laborer at a restaurant, hoping to make it to chef someday. She has flashbacks to an earlier life as a smuggler and consultant and smuggler. In the century that she lives, man can live more or less indefinitely, as her recent accident proved. She "accidentally" ran her car into a rate unprotected abudtment. . Since downloading was a civil right, her insurance had paid for her to be downloaded. She had always been accident prone or so it seemed, this was not the first time she had had a fatal accident. She wished they would not revive her, but no such provision existed for that choice. The government had determined that death was unjust and unnecessarily cruel, so the would not consciencous objectors refuse resusitation and downloading. It was difficult to commit suicide because everything was fool proof. To hurt onself, one had to really use ones ingenuity.

No one was allowed to die and abortions were not practiced, there was no such thing as an unwanted baby, since reproduction was generally done in other ways than sex. Society had evolved into what the inhabitants of the planet called heaven on earth. They all agreed on everything and everyone was great, no locks were needed anymore, there were virtually no annoyances, they had all been engineered away and the human hives buzzed merrily along.

Phylis was different, she had the nightmares, the visions of the past that made her come unglued. She kept trying to drop her insurance so that she could die, but since it was part of universal health care, she could not turn it down. So here she was, back in her old job, just days after her own funeral, which she had attended. She had been suicidal for weeks, which was very rare in this age. Virtually everyone was happy and peaceful, like a billion Forrest Gumps, life was a box of chocolates for most people. Even government seemed perfect, it provided everything for everyone, like a behemoth beehive, ordered and engineered to the hilt.

Phylis would have been like that too, if it wasn't for the dreams at night and the visions during the day that she had. Vision's of someother person a man, someone very un-like her, who had lived long ago somewhere far away. She eventually realizes that

In her first life she had been Phil, an outlaw and an outcast, he had died violently, murdered in jail. Since he had checked donor on his drivers license, his body was available for laboratory use. His brain had been donated to an experiment called downloading and his body was preserved as part of a cryongenics experiment. His brain was later one of the first succesfully transplanted brains, but due to mislabeling and a incorrectly read DNA test which would have shown him to be a white male, he was mistakenly downloaded into another donor body of a black woman who had been a pauper at death and therefore available for experimentation in her community.

Phil's brain downloaded into Jane Doe's body became Phylis, a black woman with a white man's brain. It worked, but it created flashbacks.

Phil had lied about his smoking when he went in for the lung transplant. He had told the Doctor that he had quit, but he went right along and smoked till the day of the scheduled operation. Then he was found out and he was turned down and turned out onto the street with one dead cancerous lung and one dying lung. Phylis becomes aware through her dreams that she is in the wrong body. This happens when she

and Phil make fantastical love and come together. They both realize at this point what has happened and both determine to get their own bodies back.

"I'll see you on the other side", Phil told Joey as he had meant to tell Sharon and Sally. "I think we'll see each other on the other side and if not, I want you to know that it's been a real pleasure knowing you and loving you."

The boy looked at him funny, not being 100% comfortable with the subject, but critically thinking about what his dad had said.

As Phil got out of the car one of Sharon's friends also pulled up in the driveway. He wondered if she had a bloodhound nose like Sharon's, if so, she'd smell the burnt smell on him and she would know. After all she was a little younger than Phil, so she certainly was of the generation that recognized its odor or aroma depending on how you looked at it.

"That's it!", thought Phil as he picked up the smelly kitchen garbage. It would hide the smell of the smoke on him and it was something that needed to be done.

Phil told her about the buy the guys in the empty lot across from the liquor store, the other guy on the curb by the tavern, he told her the whole thing and finally he told her about the two cop cars that had driven past with their sirens on, just two blocks ahead of them.

"That is just really stupid and selfish", she said. "Don't you care what would happen to us if you got arrested."

"Life's tragic", he retorted. "I've thought about what would happen to me and that's worse than what would happen to you."

"You selfish son of a bitch!", she yelled.

"Hey you're always preparing to take care of yourself, you listened good to your dad's advice, you'll be okay."

"You selfish son of a bitch!", she repeated.

Phil picked up his tea and took it into the bathroom with him, he did not want the fly buzzing around the kitchen to touch it.

"I don't trust you fly", Phil pronounced. "I won't trust you till your squashed like a fly should be."

"Buzz, buzz, buzz", was the reply of the fly.

A flies life must really stink, thought Phil, you fly around that's cool, but you eat shit. No wonder their lives are short, who would want to live like that.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz", repeated the fly. "We only eat shit when we have to, you know we eat other things that are very tasty, like your hamburgers when you cool out and your ass someday."

"And as for shit, that's what we do on you when you're asleep, buzz, buzz, buzz."

Women want men to work like pistons, either with their arms, penis or their brains to provide her children with what they need. Men wish their wives would lighten up, neither gets what they want.

This morning Phil woke up and after some thinking changed his opinion on evolution. This day the logic of us evolving from ancient humanoid apes was just starting to escaping him, but the logic of that humanoid ape evolving from creatures that crawled out of the sea seemed an even greater stretch. He was having a reverse Scopes trial in his mind. This time he was finding that he did not have to embrace evolution or creation, he could remain open minded out both theories, seeing neither as proven yet.

Religions even Christianity were probably largely superstitions and myths he thought, but the prophecies were still likely to be true because their probably is some supernatural mechanism in control of the universs.

"Aren't you going to do any interviews for your report on forging presses?", Sharon asked.

"No", Phil replied nonchalantly. "I know all I need to know to write this report and Mr. Watanabe will tell me the rest."

"Mr. Watanabe?", Sharon was confused. "I thought you were doing the report for Mr. Watanabe, why would he be giving you information?"

"Well I'm not sure he will, but if calls me to complain or comment about the report, he might give me some inadvertant information. If he doesn't complain or comment, my market research was probably in the right ball park and he may be a repeat customer, when I follow up in the future when I feel like it."

"That's kind of crooked you know", Sharon said seriously.

"I know", Phil replied. "But as the president of this company, I have a responsibility to make as large a return for my stockholders as possible. You and I just happen to be the only stockholders. Since my product is information and speculation and that cost's me very little to generate, it's only logical that I should sell as little of it as possible for as much as possible to fullfill my task to maximize return on investment for us stockholders."

Phil saw himself as filling a niche instead of having a job. Somebodies going to prey on these huge corporations and somehow I ended being the one doing it.

"Well it's still dishonest", Sharon told him.

"Yeah, but it's mostly rich Japanese corporations, if anyone should be bleed a little it's them", Phil defended himself.

"It's still not right", she sternly told him.

STONED POTTED PLANTS

Not only were the plants stoned, due to conditions in the atmosphere, but now Phil's computer was stoned thanks to the virus that someone had planted. Was it that part-timer that was working for him recently?

Phil told Sharon about his fantasies and he was sure she would be appalled.

"You didn't have to tell me all that", she said. "I would much rather not have known."

"This is just the way I am", Phil apologized to Sharon. "I might be able to change, but not by myself."

He wondered if it would have been better to withhold the details from her. Maybe maybe not. She did not want them, but she wanted the truth she said, so he had given her the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He hoped he had not wrecked their marriage.

Phil had a few close calls, where he found himself in bed with other women, but he never could go all the way. Something made him stop before it went too far. He also had tried when angry at her, to put Sharon in "degrading" fantasized sexual predicaments. To her credit, in his fantasies he could not really get her to do anything she said she wouldn't do in real life. For example he imagined some of her more attractive female friends giving him oral sex and doing it with other women and him at the same time, but even in his sexual fantasies, Sharon would not do it.

"Like I said", Phil repeated. "This is just the way I am", I don't know if I can change unless God does it, I don't think I have the will or the way otherwise."

"Well God will change you, but you're going to have to want to", Sharon said.

"Yeah, I guess that's right", Phil pondered his situation. "But I enjoy these little vices so much"

Sharon looked at him very seriously and spoke in the tone of a pastor, "no vice is little".

According to the man on the nature show on TV, success for an individual organism in evolutionary terms is reproducing.

We always hear that the number one goal of the individual is surviving and this is probably true. But the number one goal of the gene pool is to have that organism reproduce itself in order to keep it's valuable genes in circulation.

The individual's goal of surviving is consistent with nature's goal of reproduction, cause the longer the individual survives, the more likely it is to reproduce.

As a parent Phil thought it was better not to try to publish anything, because to do so might endanger his loved ones. This sounded consistent with laws of nature where the next generation is preserved, although in nature males generally have less interest in this than females. Was it better to take this route or to take the route of publishing in order to try to change things for the "better" and therefore help more people in the long run than just ones loved ones.

The problem was that Phil was not sure that his points of view were right and he had never been told by God or his conscience or anything else that he should try to spread his views. In light of that, it seemed that he and his would be better off if he just kept a therapeutic journal and maybe try to publish in the future if there ever came a time when zealots and mental cases were not in such high numbers. It can be argued that one has an obligation to participate in the processes of government and societal evolution, but Phil would lay low. He would just try to get himself and his family through this turbulent period of history, knowing that in some distant time, things may be much better, but barring divine intervention, it was likely to be a very long time in the future.

Phil didn't want to use the cellular phone too much, it was to economically justifiable in his opinion. He was really getting it for emergency use only, in case he or Sharon had trouble on the road or elsewhere, so they could call 911. He opted for the very lowest monthly cost plan that the cell phone company offered.

"But if you use it much at all, you'll save money with out cellular saver or cellular signature plans, the rate per minute of air time is much lower", the salesman said persuasively.

"I'm not going to use it at all except for emergencies", Phil said resisting the sales pitch. "Hopefully, it won't be used at all."

He thought about how high the bill would be if he and especially Sharon used it with impunity. She spent literally hours a day on the phone talking to her friends, Phil spent a couple hours a year talking to friends, whatever that means.

I'll give the number to my drug dealer and my family, he unconsciously reasoned, both could use it in case of emergencies.

"I don't think either one of us should necessarily be the other's master, but if there is to be a master between us, then I'll be your master, you won't be mine", he told her.

"Jesus is my master", Sharon replied. "If you had any sense you would let him be your's too."

"The problem is that I don't believe your story of Jesus, I think you and your establishment church have it all fouled up and have largely missed the point, so why should I accept your version of things?"

"It's not our version, it's his, it's God's version that I live by!", she told him sternly.

"I'm sorry, I'm not convinced enough that you've got it down right", Phil replied.

"I know I don't have the Christian walk down right", Sharon defended her stand. "But I know that it's right and I strive to be a better Christian all the time."

"Yeah, but what I'm saying is that I think your buddies have got a lot of superstition and misinterpretation, you might just of missed Jesus's point and that's why I'll not take orders from you sitting down, I'll stand up and say no, mind your own business and stop thinking that everyone elses business is yours, take your millions of laws and stick em you know where..."

He would have gone on forever, but she slammed down the book she had been reading and stomped out of the room.

Everyone says, "Yeah, I'll admit I'm a little bad, but you or they are very, very bad and we are going to have to do something about you."

"Oh, Joyce", Sharon lamented, "Phil has a nasty habit and it's really troubling me."

Sharon's old friend looked at her, waiting for her to say what the nasty habit was.

"Well", Joyce finally asked, "what is it, does he pick his nose or smoke pot or something."

"Well, yes, he does both of those", Sharon replied sadly, "but this is worse, now he's seeing another woman."

"Poetry is where all the fundamental questions of humankind are addressed", a Serbian poet on NPR, whose poetry hit Phil like a sledgehammer in the chest. It was a sad poem about a group of Serbian schoolboys shot by the Nazis.

"Do you think the Japanese are trying to defeat us economically, since they couldn't militarily", Jack asked.

"Maybe, but I doubt it. I think it's just a matter of them having a strong desire to compete, a strong need to trade internationally to survive and a different way of going about it. I don't see it as sinister and diabolical plot to destroy it, but I do see it as a determined and methodical approach to constantly win greater market shares", Phil replied. "When an American company succeeds like them, we tend to applaud and we usually don't ask for all the details about how they did it. It's the old thing about behind every great fortune there's usually a great crime."

On the radio in the background the Talking Heads sang, "take me to the river, drop me in the water, push me in the river ... wash me... taking me down". Phil listened to it and thought about being washed clean.

"Your're just out for yourself", Vaughn said to Phil.

Phil didn't disagree, but he didn't think he was any worse in this respect than the average guy.

"Yeah, you're right", Phil responded, "I'm just like everyone else out there, most people just don't seem to know or admit that they're the same way. The human being is desperately selfish whether it knows it or not. Every thing we do is directly or indirectly ultimately a selfish act, even when we think we're at our most generous the old man had said about humans.

"Sailing on a ship to nowhere...Silly human race", the Yes song played in the background and Phil sang along to the irritation of Vaughn.

"You're the only one that I've ever met whose as selfish and worthless as you say everyone else is. I think you'd better take your lithium now, before you start coming to your senses and realize how wrong you are", Vaughn spat out, "everything you do is wrong and traitorish."

"I'm not going to let your pet peeves be mine too", Phil answered, "it's my life and I'll do what I want, you can lump it for all I care."

"Mr. Glencoe, you are not fooling anyone", Saito said.

"We've been watching you and we know that you've been sitting around smoking something illegal and bullshitting us on the reports you've done for us. It's been pure fiction, that you've passed off for competitor intelligence that we've paid you thousands of dollars for."

Phil chuckled inside, he felt like saying something smart assed, but in his present situation, he couldn't afford to burn any more bridges.

"That's entirely wrong", Phil replied indignantly, "your sources are lying and I will sue them!"

Organized religion is an elaborately designed ritual to get rid of our shame and guilt, so is everything else.

Phil told Vaughn about sending the fax out yesterday about delivering the report and advising the client to have his second-half payment ready at that time. From past experience, the client probably expected to have Phil show up personally.

Now as Phil and his friend talked, he prepared to send out another fax, that said, "Must advise you that report will be delivered to you tomorrow by overnight courier instead of by me personally..."

"You're the most situationally ethical guy I know", Said Vaughn after hearing of Phil's latest ploy.

"Maybe the most sit ethical of your friends who know they're being that way", Phil said, "the others don't even know they're being that way, but they are and some of them are just as bad."

At the Republican convention Mrs. Quayle said that something like 'not everyone protested in the sixties', implying that those who did were wrong. Well tell Mrs. Quayle that I was only 13 then, but I did and I darn sure aint apologizing for it. Later, regarding Hillary Clinton, she said that being criticized means your being taking seriously. Can you figure this one out.

"I don't want to compare you to Nero fiddling while Rome burned", said Sharon, "but that's exactly what you're doing to your family, by the way you're living your life."

Disregarding, her, Phil looked out the window at that strange window and thought about what if anything it meant and about the beard he was planning to start growing immediately. Heck, his business was already about down to nothing, how could growing a beard hurt it anymore.

"It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine...sybiotic, embryonic... it's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine", ...REM.

"We're entering the glass age", said Clarence. Who looked much better than he had in the last movie he'd done with Jimmy Stewart. That was before he got his wings, so he didn't look as good as he did now, even though he was forty years older and fifty pounds heavier if you count his wings.

"What?", Phil inquired.

"Man has been from the stone age to the bronze age to the iron age to the age of metals to the glass age now, the light age and boyond is stil to come. Now we use glass to make car bodies, planes and telephone wires. It's abundant in space and light weight."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!", said Phil, "I'm sorry I asked you."

Clarence looked at him calmly and smiled, just like he looked at Jimmy Stewart in his last movie.

"All the way in, to half out and enuciate your words", Clarence said to Phil. He was instructing Phil about what to do with his fat bottom lip and what to do about his stuttering. Phil was supposed to catch on to the instruction without further explanation, but even though he had had a lot of previous instruction, he did not comprehend. "Welcome to wherever you are", the name of a new INXS album that the DJ just mentioned, was what he was thinking about.

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"You should take the high road and not get high", Phil told Joey, "then you'll have the option to be a secret agent."

At his tender young age, Joey still sometimes fantasized about being a James Bond type secret agent. "If you take the low road and use the crutch of drugs, you'll fail their test and you'll have to do something else." Phil was thinking about his consulting work which was certainly a type of spying in his opinion. Unfortunately he was doing it for the economic enemy.

Joey was very curious about what Phil was up to all the time and Phil saw this as a good way for the boy to find out things for himself, instead of being told. The biggie was one area, where he'd as soon the kids found out about for themselves.

"You practice sleuthing all the time, that along with being smart is how you get to be a James Bond, or Sherlock Holmes. Just don't snoop around too much, especially around my desk", Phil gave Joey a clue and a warning.

Lithium ended and the DJ announced a test of the emergency broadcast system. "Darn that noise", Phil said as he turned the radio down lower and lower, until the volume was zero and he couldn't hear a thing.

"I hate that noise", Phil said about the loud piercing tone.

"Yeah, but it could save your life", Joey shouted.

"I'll get rid of you totally", Phil said flipping the swith from radio to tape and totally eliminating the stations signal. A flashing feeling of relief went through his head, combating the mild headache he was having that morning.

It seemed for a second that turning the radio off eliminated the irritating emergency network tone better than just turning the volume to zero, but a few seconds later it seemed that he had been wrong, his head ached as much as before.

"You are totally without honor Mr. Glencoe", Tanaka said.

In Phil's mind, Tanaka was the same character as the Tanaka in the James Cagney movie. He didn't think this one was diabolical like the movie version, but the scenario was similar.

Phil almost crack again and almost uttered something about this being just like in the movies, but he thought better of it and held his tongue. He didn't live on bread alone, but at the moment he wanted some and burning this bridge would not help him bring home bread.

He dictated an entry into his microcassette recorder diary after the meeting. "God have mercy on me", he said. "God, I know you know me better than I know myself, but this poor diary is my letter of explanation to you and anyone else that cares. Maybe it will be a literary excorsism of my soul, so I'll straighten out before it's too late. God have mercy on your children."

Sharon was mad that he had drawn a picture of the tree during work hours, not to mention how she felt about the picture itself.

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"You're sorry enough as it is", Vaughn spat at him.

"Amen, brother", Phil meekly replied.

"God and Jesus are said to transcend time, space, life and death. We never can do this on our own. Even if by cloning, downloading and transplanting you lived a million years, we will always be much lessor than them and we'd better admit it. We can never move back and forth with all the assurance and priviledge that they do.

Everyone wants to rule the world, a good song by Tears for Fears was on as Phil scanned the radios airways and Phil tuned it in on the dial. This was a radio station that didn't want to be near Phil and instead of moving the antennae close to his body as he did with his usual station, he had to move the antennae as far away from him as possible for good reception. No wonder, it was a light rock station and his electrical field was generally not comfortable with the music they played.

"If you really want the notebook computer, you'll just have to work harder to earn enough money to buy it", Sharon said with her conventional salt of the earth wisdom.

"There you go again, telling me to work harder", Phil protested. "I'll just wait till the price comes down like printers have , instead of getting deeper into the rat race".

He was thinking of all the people he had seen as he walked along the road watching the drivers. Most of them looked harried, their faces scrunched up like racing car drivers. They were in most cases looking at the road or in the rearview mirror. About one in ten was looking at him.

I'm not really trying to reach what you call Nirvana, I'm just trying to get this machine to run on all eight cylinders. I'd rather do it naturally, but I'll settle for whatever it takes to reach the level of confidence that most people seem to reach without any help. At least till they get old, poor, scared or in some other way devastated. Pink Floyd's "Run" was playing in the background.

"Do you or don't you think the Bible's the complete and absolute word of God", Vaughn wanted to know.

"I think that maybe it is and maybe it isn't", Phil replied, a little irritated at the inquisition.

"That's no answer!", Vaughn retorted angrily, "either you do or you don't, what is it!"

"It's none of your fucking business, and at the moment, that is my answer, because I don't know, I'm not convinced either way and at the moment I don't care to blindly believe either side."

Sharon was appalled, "how can you say all that rot!"

"If it wasn't for you women, us men would still be living in caves, wearing simple animal skins."

"You live for love and want to be beautiful and surrounded by beautiful things, that's why man has always had to work his fingers to the bone. It's not the basic neccesities that have been so hard to get, it's been all the things that you want to adorne yourselves and your walls with. And since you have the kids, we've been the ones that have had to go out into the world and take care of business, so you can have those things. We have to do the dirty work, so we can keep you halfway happy, since that's what you've

convinced us is good and right. You girls have you're own daredevil system, the young girls dare each other to have sex, by always asking if they're having it yet. Boys just lie to each other about it, girls who knows. Boys also have to dare each other to do things that will endear them to the girls who are watching them and reporting through their grapevine, who is cool, who is cute and whose a dork. The boys are not analyzing it the same way and just want to know who is cute, who will do it and what do you have to do to get her to do it with you.

" Just then Vaughn burst in, "are you doing anything illegal here?", he queried Phil.

"What do you mean", Phil answered defensively.

"Based on good information, I have a feeling that you're doing some things you shouldn't be doing."

"What the heck kind of question is that, Vaughn. I've known you a long time, but obviously I don't know you as well as you seem to know me."

"Just answer the question, I want to know", Vaughn persisted.

"You have no right to come into my office and accuse me of some un-named crime, there's the door, use it and don't come back!", Phil was nearly livid.

Back at the house Phil and Sharon clashed after discussing how their votes for president were going to cancel each others out.

"Hey, I probably wouldn't have voted to give women the vote and...", Phil was saying when Sharon interrupted.

"Now that women voters outnumber and vote in higher numbers than men and vote for women or men that follow their dictates, I won't voluntarily follow their rules. I won't voluntarily be controlled by sisters, moms and grandmas anymore than by the good old boys, the Russians or anyone else that wants to rule me for their sake or mine."

"Well there's nothing you can do about it so you'd better move your ass over", Sharon said, "cause one way or another, you will do what the majority tells you."

"I'm tired of being just another of your excercise machines", Phil complained dishonestly. He went on trying to lay the basis for his case, "but I'll be happy to just be that or your gardner or whatever role you want me to play in the family, since you don't want me to live here anymore." In the background the old song There Is A Rose In Spanish Harlem played on the oldies station, "I'm gonna pick that rose and watch her as she grows, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la."

Phil's confusing argument didn't sway Sharon, she continued to vent her justifiable anger. She was on a different wavelength, and as EC said, "tigers crouched in jungles in her dark eyes".

There are somethings I shouldn't tell you for our own good, maybe in a few months or years we can talk about it more, but for now you're better off not knowing. If the boy figured it out, fine, if not even better.

Phil walked outside and mosed into his rickety garage. "I think I came out here for some fresh air", he said to himself. But he knew there was some other reason too, he just couldn't think of it at the moment. Was it to water the bushes or scope out which bush he would transplant next, or was it Clarence.

In the background Tommy James and the Shondells song Crystal Blue Persuasion was playing. Love is the answer it said as Phil and his friend walked and talked.

Love and marriage is the best way to raise kids", the old man told Phil, but you can't legislate it.

"Is PBR's liberal bent any worse than CBN's conservative one", Phil asked the old man.

"I don't know if I'm a Christian", Phil said to the evangelist, "if you ask me your test question, I'll probably fail, but if you ask me if I want to be a follower of Christ the answer's yes."

"That's all very nice and happy and new age", Vaughn replied, "but you can't sit on the fence, if you can answer yes that you'd go to heaven if you died right now because of your belief in Jesus than you're a Christian, if not you aren't."

"And as a "forignor" you can win friends and influence people only if you first prove your worthiness as a loyal and trustworthy friend. Those that are already accepted into society by accident of birth have this already because they are not subject to preconceived prejudices by the majority party."

Phil put his pointer finger on his crooked bottom tooth and slowly applied pressure to try to pull it into alignment. His ears popped and it seemed like he could breath and hear a little better. This was like getting braces, but cheaper and probably slower. He expected that if he did it enough, it would eventually straighten out the crooked tooth and in the process help align his jaw to help open his sinuses and estacheon tubes. Upon examining his teeth in the mirror, he noticed no improvement, but he was certain that he felt a small improvement each time he performed this excersise. Therefore he figured that it was doing some good, even if the visual correction was too small for him to detect each time. The trick was to hang on to that small improvement and build on it. This would be easier if he wasn't under constant attack of the accusers and defenders of the status quo. These aggressive cynics, saw anyone different as a threat and had the support of the establishment, which was as always quick to cry blasphemy at anyone who didn't observe their ritual superstitions.

"That was back in the days when people knew who their fathers were and you could still tell the difference between a robot and a person.

"I'm not convinced that the Bible is totally the inspired word of God, or that life is just bootcamp for heaven or that GOP is basically the same as GOD. Why should I support a

"Another pleasant valley Sunday, here in status symbol land", the Monkees.

He got off the phone with Jack after hearing the disappointing news. Jack still hadn't connected and he had nothing at all to smoke at the office except perhaps three or for hits of rendered and re-rendered resin and crud.

Phil was depressed and stopped at the fast food drive through for a breakfast biscuit, hash browns and a cinamon raisin biscuit.

Once he arrived at the office, it took only a few minutes to smoke the pitiful shit he had left in the film container.

Finishing up, he wondered should he call Andy. Andy was the only other person he could think of to call since Jack and Cal were both dry. He hated to, since Andy would probably already thought that old Phil only called when he needed to mooch a buzz.

He wished he hadn't thrown out the two pipes he had found in his rental apartment after the last renter, an apparent small time dealer had moved out. "Maybe I'll check the garage one more time and go through those tool boxes he left", Phil considered.

On impulse, Phil spun his chair slowly around and looked in his file drawer where he kept his stash. Maybe he had overlooked something in there and with a little luck he might find a couple of stems in the corner of the drawer or something.

He kept a number of files in the drawer, things like leases from the renters that he'd had over the past three years and he hoped that some tiny smokeable scrap had slipped under them. Moving the files to one side and then to the other of the drawer, he scrounged despairingly, not really very hopeful that his search would pay off.

"Thank you God!", Phil said to himself as he picked up the carefully twisted up coffee filter. His scrounging had paid off as he had found a tiny parcel of dried out bong scrappings that he had tucked away several weeks ago. He instantly wondered if he should be thanking God for this or if it would be better to keep God out of such things.

Now he was inspired and remembered that there was another coffee filter in the garbage. He had used it to filter the bong water yesterday, maybe he could scrap a few more grains of bong crud off it. He scrounged again and was moderately rewarded, but not like he had been by the filter in the drawer. It conceivably had enough in it for him to smoke all day and hopefully by then Jack would come through.

"Another trend related to the downloaders", Clarence told Phil, "was people cloning and raising themselves as children."

"Would they download their own memories into the children they created and raised?", Phil queried.

"Sometimes they would and sometimes they wouldn't", Clarence answered. "First they would clone themselves and then they'd raise themselves from infancy to adulthood. It's another way of trying to keep themselves immortal, since many of them foolishly aspire to that."

"Sounds pretty strange", Phil said, crinkling his eyebrows in a display of disbelief.

"Well, they think that they can do a better job than their parents did with them", the old man continued.